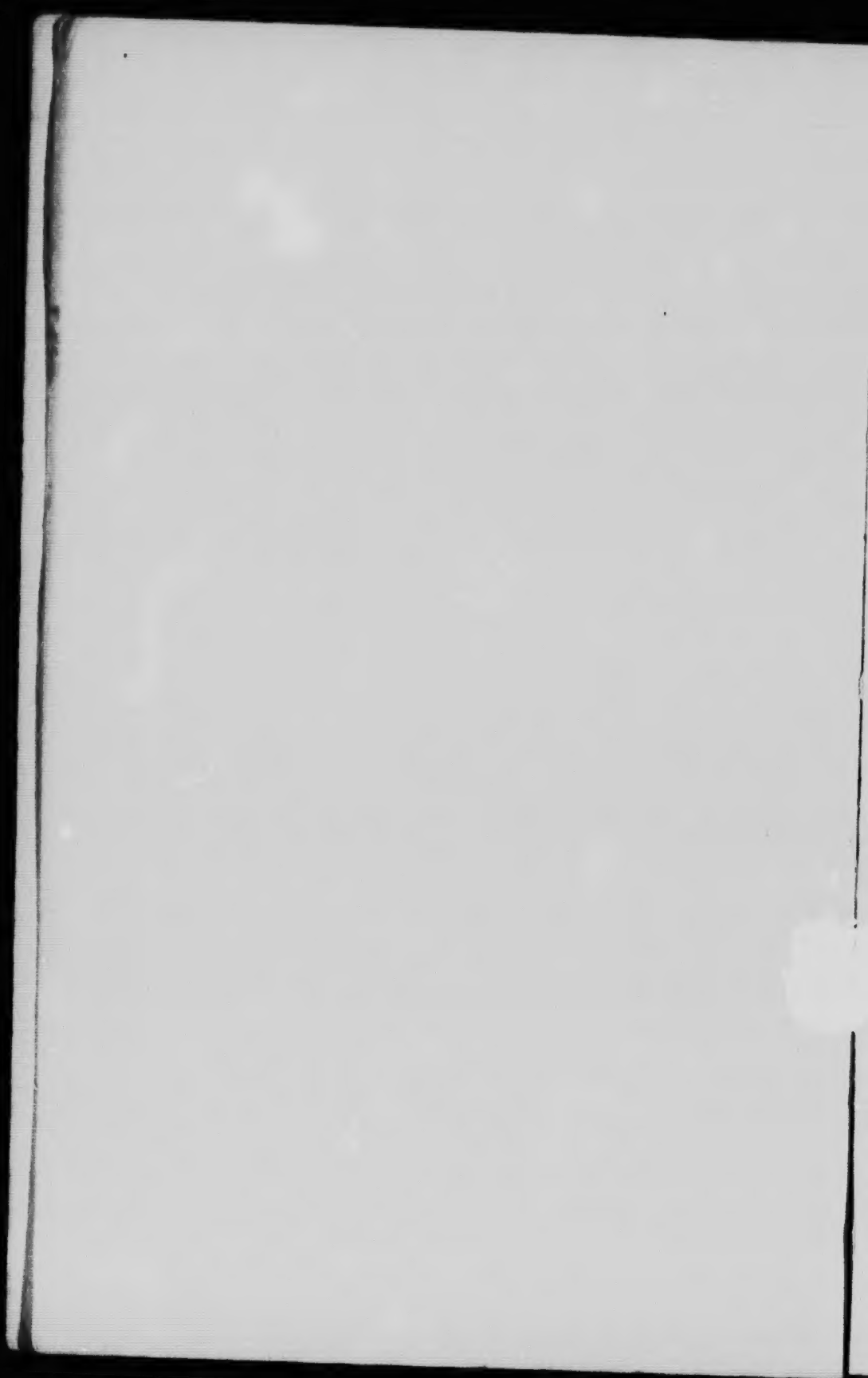




The Story of Yuku



BY
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TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1910

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**SKEPTIC, THIS STORY IS
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THE STORY OF YUKU

I.

It was the time of cherry blossoms, and it was in Japan. The sun, from a cloudless sky, shone down on the new green leaves, on the pink blossoms, on the budding hedges that lined the road, and on the straight white road itself, deserted, save for two men who were walking out from the direction of the city.

"You must possess your soul in patience, my dear Pierre," the elder of the two was saying, "for I positively decline to enter into any explanations as to whom I am taking you to see, while the sun is still blazing. What extraordinary weather it is."

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He was a tall, lean man, well on the way to fifty, a man with a gaunt face, eagle eyes, and a handsome, though rather cruelly thin-lipped, mouth. He wore the dress of a Japanese gentleman, but was evidently either an Englishman or an American. His companion, American beyond doubt, was a man of lighter build, who might be about twenty-six or seven, fair-haired, blue-eyed, and good to look at. His fair, thick hair waved slightly, and he had a trick of tossing it back, at once boyish and delightful. His eyes looked out on the world very squarely, his bright smile made the sourest smile in return, there was about him an indescribable air of merry irresponsibility, just tinged with a certain whimsical wistfulness, a faint suggestion of melancholy that baffled while it attracted. He stopped on the crest of the hill and

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glanced down on the low, clustering roofs and stunted trees of the city.

"A toy country," he said, musingly, "toy houses, toy gardens, toy people—I should say, too, toy emotions—at any rate on the part of the women. Poor souls, taught to look on marriage as a duty simply, as the prayer-book says, "for the procreation of children," and for the convenience and comfort of men. I wonder if they have any knowledge at all of the great passions?"

The elder man smiled faintly.

"At least they know how to excite them in others," he remarked. "Have you not yet visited the street of the Geisha, according to the custom of our countrymen?" The man at his side was young enough still to feel disgust, though the elder had long passed the age when things shock.

"Oh, the Geisha!" Pierre shook his

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head. "Don't care for the type. I'm not a prude, Elmsley, but that sort of thing goes against the grain, somehow. I hate the whole system, and think the government should be ostracised by other countries for permitting it." Elmsley raised his eyebrows.

"My dear Pierre, such sentiments are doubtless very creditable in Kentucky, but in Japan"—the boy laughed and flushed a little.

"I know I speak like a child, and I suppose one must allow for the difference of custom and country. It's all in the point of view. And to tell the truth, Elmsley, I might have been no more proof against the temptation than other men, but, I confess, the Japanese women have no charm for me. They simply don't appeal—although, indeed, no woman could appeal to me just now, I think."

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"I suppose you believe," the elder man's tone was dry, "that you can never love again."

"I shall never love again," the boy said, with a touch of hauteur in his tone, "nor shall I discuss the possibility. But we were not discussing the question of love, I believe. Rather, the attraction of the Japanese woman, which, I confess, I fail to appreciate."

"Perhaps you may change your tone soon," said Elmsley; "look over this hedge." They had come to a turning of the road, and facing them was a low, quaint house, set in a delicate wilderness of pink flowers. There seemed to be a score of cherry trees in the garden, so closely planted that their branches formed a feathery pink canopy overhead. A little stream wound its way among the trees, forming a clear little pool in one place,

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where lilies floated. A girl was bending over this pool, gazing intently, not at the goldfish which glinted in the sunshine as they darted to and fro in the water, but at her own pretty reflection; and a boy, somewhat younger than herself, was clapping his hands and laughing at her.

As Elmsley and Pierre approached the gate, the boy espied them and called out, while the girl raised her head with a startled movement, then glanced down, suddenly shy.

"See!" cried her brother, "is she not a cherry blossom herself?" She wore a pink kimona with a broad, blue sash. The boy had taken the long pins from her hair and had thrust in, in their stead, tiny branches of the pink flowers. She had a great bunch of the blossoms in her arms, and as she stepped across the stream to greet the two men, her brother, a mischiev-

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ous little fellow, shook one of the slender trees above her head, and she stood for a moment, laughing, in a very rain of pink petals. So Pierre first saw her—so he always pictured her to himself—and so he saw her once again, long afterwards.

She greeted Elmsley warmly, speaking in French and addressing him as "Uncle," and Pierre noted that the man was very gentle with her. After a ceremonious bow to himself in acknowledgment of Elmsley's introduction, she preceded them to the house, where a diminutive maid was setting out tea. The men seated themselves on cushions, and Yuku, the girl, who seemed to be mistress in the house, served them, serving, also, her two brothers, for there were two, as Pierre discovered, the second one but a child of three. Then she sat down beside Elmsley (she had

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scarcely raised her eyes to Pierre once) and he began to ask her questions as to what she had been doing all day. She spoke in French, as did her little brothers and all her servants, but she shyly told Pierre that if he did not speak that language she could understand English and answer "plitty well." Pierre, however, soon proved this to be unnecessary. While she chatted away to Elmsley, Pierre watched her, furtively. She was of a very different type from the other Japanese women he had seen, yet he could not tell just where the difference lay. She was Japanese and un-Japanese at once. Japanese, wonderfully Japanese, so Pierre argued, was that sylph-like figure; Japanese that dusky silken hair; Japanese, surely, those fairy feet and slim, white hands. But her face was not so round as the other women's were, and it was mar-

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vellously expressive. Her long, black eyes were larger and less slanting, her little nose was finer and more sensitive, her small chin was delicately square and her warm little red mouth—but when Pierre looked at her mouth he was seized with an overwhelming desire to kiss it instantly, and this being impracticable he turned from his scrutiny and forced his attention back to the conversation of the little boys, who were telling him how one should bring up a delicate species of goldfish.

“And now, most mysterious godfather mine,” began Pierre, when they were once more on the road leading down into the city, “perhaps you will gratify my curiosity and tell me who those children are, and why in the name of mystery they call you ‘uncle.’”

Elmsley laughed. “Your patience

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shall be rewarded, Pierre, for I am sure it has been tried. Those children are orphans and my wards. They have no living relatives and few friends, as the people look rather askance on them, owing to the fact that their guardian is an American and their life more on an American than on a Japanese plan. They call me 'uncle' as they have been taught to do."

"Won't you kindly enlighten me a little further?" begged Pierre, laughingly.

"Why, yes, though I must say, Pierre, that I would do almost anything to avoid an explanation—either to make it or to listen to it. However, to be as brief as possible—they are the children of the old man whose Secretary I was when I first came to Japan. I picked him up out of a hole and he grew fond of me and I lived at

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his home until the death of his first wife, the girl's mother. He married a second time, had these two sons, and he himself died two years ago, his second wife having died a year before. I stepped into his place in the city and carry on the business in trust for the children whom he confided to my care. I keep my rooms downtown, but the house up there is my home. I am very fond of my small charges, particularly, perhaps, of the girl."

Pierre smiled in sudden reminiscence. "I must take back my words, Elmsley," he said. "I have seen one beautiful woman in Japan, and today."

"You think Yuku beautiful?"

"'Beautiful' is hardly the word for one so tiny and so utterly unconscious. She is simply lovely, a cherry blossom, as the little brother said."

"She is a very dear child," Elms-

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ley said, with a warmth that surprised his young companion. They were passing at this moment the foot of the street of the Geisha, where some of the lanterns were already lighted, and they could read the names on the paper doors.

"I am afraid you thought me rather a young prig, from the way I spoke regarding those ladies down in this street, this afternoon," Pierre observed. Elmsley stopped suddenly and gazed into the bright, young face beside him.

"Understand this," he said, sternly, "that if you had not spoken as you did this afternoon concerning the Geisha, you never would have met Yuku."

Pierre looked up in amazement, but, like a mask, Elmsley had resumed his old expression, and before the boy could reply had plunged into

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a conversation concerning the latest news from England, which lasted until they reached Pierre's hotel, where they parted.

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II.

PIERRE ran lightly up to his rooms and locked his door. Then he took from his pocket a gold ring with a single gleaming diamond in its centre and gazed at it with darkening eyes. It was his habit to gaze at this ring at odd intervals when he was alone. Some time before he had bought it, and had slipped it on a girl's finger, kissing the finger as he did so, and then kissing the girl many times. There were bigger diamonds to be had, but Pierre's purse had not been wide enough nor full enough to admit of his buying a larger diamond, even if both he and the girl had not agreed that very large diamonds were in poor taste, anyway. But, unfortunately, there came into their lives a man from

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the West, a certain big man with a loud voice, whose purse was so wide and so well filled that he could have covered the girl from head to foot in diamonds and still have been able to buy a few more for his own studs. And he signified to the girl's mamma his entire willingness to do so, and also to give mamma herself diamonds or their equivalent in cash, just as she preferred—this not in purely disinterested generosity, but in return for the slight privilege of calling the girl his wife.

Mamma suggested to daughter that she would look well in diamonds, and that she, mamma, might be the better for a new carriage and pair, a winter on the Riviera, and possibly a box at the opera, all of which she had calculated might be easily maintained out of the equivalent of the diamonds in cash.

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And, although it is the daughter who nominally takes to herself a husband, yet, as all good daughters know, it is her mamma who must be pleased, and only a heartless and unfeeling child will disappoint her mother. So at least, was the situation made clear to Pierre in one last stormy interview, when the girl had given him back his beautiful little ring (having one easily twice its size ready to slip on in its stead as soon as he had gone), and Pierre had argued and pleaded and then grown white and proud, and the girl had wept many tears and had at last cried that she would always love him, but could not marry him on account of poor, dear mamma, and Pierre had put the little ring stupidly into his pocket and had walked home as one in a bad dream, and had sat up late into the night with the ring in his hands.

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In the morning a letter had come from his godfather, Elmsley. He never remembered having seen this personage, who had gone to Japan when Pierre was a child, but Elmsley had written at odd times to his godson, and of late had been urging him to come to Japan, where, he said, was a splendid opening for a young man. Pierre read the letter, which again referred to the opening, cabled to Tokyo, and sailed the next week.

The weather was fair, his fellow-passengers delightful, and Pierre recovered from his blow more rapidly than he had believed possible. His heart still ached and his nights were bad, but the stunning effects were wearing off, and to his own surprise he found himself able to take not a little pleasure in the voyage and to speculate with interest on this strange godfather of his who had gone to Japan

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so long ago and had never returned, but who had always taken so marked an interest in himself.

He found him to be a grave, inscrutable man, with a cool, indifferent manner and an almost uncanny power of reading other people's secrets. Before the first evening was over he knew Pierre's story—the bare details, which, indeed, were all he asked; he had smiled a little, but had made no comment respecting the boy's evident wish not to discuss the matter.

In the morning he had presented Pierre to the Japanese man who held the opening which Pierre was to fill; and Pierre, having filled it for several days entirely to the little man's satisfaction, signed certain papers which pledged him to continue both to fill and to satisfy for some ten years, and settled down to a quiet routine of Japanese life. It was just a week

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after his arrival that Elmsley had taken him to the House of the Pool where Lilies float (such was its ceremonious name) and he had discovered Yuku.

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III.

ON a certain still, bright afternoon, Yuku sat under the cherry trees beside the lily pool. Her wee brother, tired from much running about, had thrown himself down beside her and was asleep with his head, small and round and black, on her dress. The click of a closing gate caused Yuku to raise her eyes and espy Pierre coming towards, motioning her to sit still and not disturb the sleeping child. A delicate color rose in Yuku's cheeks and her eyes widened with pleasure as Pierre threw himself down beside her on the grass and talked to her in a low tone. In the few weeks that had passed since his first introduction there, Pierre had become a familiar figure in the garden of

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cherry trees. Elmsley seemed pleased to have him go as often as he cared to, and the lonely garden, the quaint house with its "homey" air, the merry children, and, above all, their sweet sister, combined to make this very often indeed.

"I have a pretty story for you, Yuku," Pierre said, to-day. "You know I have a tiny house of my own now?"

"I know," Yuku nodded. "The people call it the house of the Open Window, because it is said that you have built a window in it (as my uncle did in this house) which you keep always open."

Pierre laughed.

"The natives probably think me crazy. But it is about that very window that I am going to tell you. Yesterday, when I was writing in there, I heard a queer fluttering sound, and,

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Yuku, a little white bird had flown into the room." Yuku's dark eyes grew wide.

"It had flown right in," she echoed.

"But what a beautiful omen. Was it pure white, Pierre?"

"Pure white, little Yuku, with black eyes."

"How I wish I could have seen it," Yuku sighed.

"You shall. I have brought it for you," and Pierre opened one of his big pockets and drew forth a quivering white little thing. Yuku clasped it in rapture, pressing it against her soft neck and kissing the white feathers.

"Clip its wings, clip its wings," cried the elder of the boys, who came running out of the house. "Then it can't fly away. Give it to me, Yuku."

Yuku sprang up, nearly overturning the sleepy little one.

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"No, no," she cried. "You shall not touch it."

Pierre stretched lazily on the warm ground, content to let them argue it out, thought what a child Yuku was, in spite of her eighteen summers.

Presently, when they had perched the bird on a branch, where it seemed quite content to stay, Yuku bethought herself of her duties as hostess.

"If you will come in," she said to Pierre, "I will give you some tea."

"If you will bring the tea out here, I will tell you another story," Pierre returned.

Yuku considered for a moment, then agreed, with the proviso that the story should be long.

When he first came to the House of the Water Lilies, the children had been bashful, Yuku so very much so that she would never speak to him unless compelled by courtesy.

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Wishing to win the boys' hearts, Pierre had begun by telling them stories, and he soon noticed that at such times Yuku always contrived to be near, though she slipped shyly away when she thought herself noticed. Then one day Pierre had told the children the story of the eleven swans, the sweetest of all Hans Andersen's fairy tales, and Yuku had drawn closer and closer. Pierre never raised his head or gave the slightest indication that he was aware of her, but as the story reached its climax—when the sister, condemned to death, flings the garments she has made over the swans and they become men again and save her—he heard a quick sob of mingled excitement and relief, and, looking around, he saw Yuku standing, tense, behind him, her little hands clasped tightly together, her eyes wide and shining. She turned pink when

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Pierre caught her eyes, and ran away, but after that Yuku always shared in his stories, and soon it was Yuku to whom they were told, and the little boys listened and understood if they could. For the fairy tales were soon left alone, and Pierre told her stories about the girls in other lands, and what love means to them. He took a strange, passionate interest in thus trying to make her understand what love and marriage should mean to every woman. He did not think of the harm he might do in thus giving the girl glimpses of the joy which she could never hope to have—for in Yuku's class marriage was simply an arrangement entered into by one's parents or guardians, and one loved one's husband if possible and obeyed him either way. There was no thought of love beforehand, on the part of the

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girl, at least—it would have been indelicate in the extreme.

Pierre knew this, but he was young and thoughtless, and he loved to watch Yuku's eyes grow bigger and bigger and to see the slim, white hands lock themselves over his; to watch the red lips part with excitement, and note the quickened rising and falling of her breast under the soft, silken robes.

Sometimes Yuku told Pierre stories, quaintly-phrased old legends and Japanese folklore, and sometimes, when Pierre coaxed, stories that she made up herself, founded on his own.

"Tell me a love story," Pierre would beg; "tell me one like those I have told you. Then I will see if you understand what I have been talking about," and Yuku would tell him a tale amusingly like the last one he had

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told her; but where Pierre always ended "so she gave up all else for love, Yuku, and was happy ever afterwards," Yuku invariably would say, "but her parents selected another husband for her, deeming him of her choice unsuitable, and she honorably ceased to think of him and lived a dutiful and obedient wife all her days." And Pierre used to think, whimsically, that in those two opposing endings lay a perfect example of the utter difference between their two races.

"*Could* any woman do that?" he asked her to-day, impatiently, "forget her love to order, so to speak, as a duty?"

"A good Japanese woman could," Yuku had replied.

"You are a good Japanese woman; could you, if you loved?"

Yuku flushed and thrust out her

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small, expressive hands. "I don't know, I don't know; what is the matter with me? Sometimes I can hardly believe that I am a Japanese. I am restless and unhappy. I have longings that frighten me. It is your fault, Pierre; yours and your stories."

It flashed over Pierre that she was not such a child after all, and that possibly he was wrong in deliberately trying to enlighten the girl when it could only bring her sorrow. He took one of her little, restless hands in his. "Would you rather I did not tell you any more stories, little one?"

Yuku lifted grave eyes to Pierre's. "It would not matter now," she said, gently. "You have taught me my lesson and I have learned far more than I can ever forget—or than you think you have taught, perhaps." Words, these, not at all in accord with

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his conception of the little cherry blossom, and Pierre had an uncomfortable feeling that Yuku's childishness might be only one phase of her character; but the next moment the girl was asking him eager questions as to the best diet for a small, white bird, and the momentary flash of the woman in her eyes was gone.

A few days later, when again he had the good fortune to find her alone, Yuku told Pierre a different story.

"There was a Japanese girl," she cried, pouring out her words breathlessly, "and she loved a Japanese man and gave up everything and went away with him, and her parents made her outcast, and she was *glad, glad, glad!*"

"Why, Yuku! Yuku!" exclaimed Pierre, amused at her vehemence, but pained when he saw the storm in her eyes. "I shall tell you no more

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stories if *this* is the effect they have. It hurts me to hear you speak in that tone and makes me very unhappy."

"I'm sorry, Pierre." With a quick gesture of submission she caught his hand and laid her forehead upon it. Pierre stroked the silky, black hair in silence for a moment, then lifted the little face and scanned it, gravely. Her soft eyes filled with tears under his gaze, and she whispered again that she was sorry.

"I am not angry, dear—at least, not with you, little cherry blossom."

"Not the smallest bit angry?" asked Yuku, tears already drying and baby dimples coming back because Pierre smiled at her.

"Not the smallest bit, Yuku."

There was a low bench in the garden made from the twisting branches of some strong vine, and Yuku had brought cushions to make it soft for

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"that lazy Pierre." Yuku herself always sat on the grass, and when Pierre's stories were most interesting, or she herself more in earnest than usual, she would rise to her knees and clasp his arm with both her little hands, her big eyes fastened on his. At those times Pierre thought her a child. At others, he was not at all sure. She was puzzling, this slender Japanese maiden, with her quick changes from child to woman and her ever ready smiles and tears.

Walking home in the yellow evening sunlight, Pierre thought, with a strange sense of self-reproach, that he had been taking an extraordinary amount of pleasure in Yuku's companionship for a man who had just been so badly hurt at the hands of another woman. He still had his bad moments, when the pain in his heart seemed to sear his whole body, when

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his soul cried out upon the gods and fate in fierce, bitter questioning, "Why, why, why?" But those moments had become rarer and rarer lately, and he was forced to confess that he generally assisted them, as it were, by gazing at the girl's photograph and at the rejected ring, and by deliberately living over again those two great, contrasting moments in his life—when she had told him she would be his wife and when she had told him she would not. And in the interim—in the day times how he had forgotten for hours at a time. How Yuku seemed to banish it all, to throw a bright spell over him. Little, fascinating Yuku! Little, childish, impetuous Yuku, with her sweet mouth and wide eyes full of wonder! Little, loving girl, with those bewildering flashes of the woman in her—gone in an instant, but giving promises for

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the future bewilderingly sweet! He could not help being interested in her, though as for forgetting—! His eyes grew dark with pain, and instinctively his fingers sought the ring that he always carried. Then, to his utter disgust, he found himself wondering just how much smaller that ring would need to be to fit Yuku's finger—and wrapped it into its box as if in that thought he had profaned it.

Nevertheless, as the summer days went on, the pain in his heart grew less and less sharp. He often thought of the girl's last words, and pictured her living her life as duty prompted, but holding him always in her heart. There was something soothing in such a picture that eased his wounded self-esteem. It appealed to the poetry of his nature, just as the romantic carry-

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ing of her ring and picture next his heart appealed to it.

One day he told Yuku the story. She had asked him innocently if all American girls gave up everything for love, and Pierre, in a sudden, bitter wave of feeling, had cried that they did not, indeed they did not; and he had told her his own story—told it as having been the experience of one of his friends. At the end Yuku rather took his breath away. “You are that man,” she announced, calmly. “You needn’t pretend, Pierre. Do you—do you love her still?” Her voice was a little higher than usual and she spoke quickly.

Pierre, in quick pride, said, “No, my love is dead.”

Yuku sprang to her feet, and, catching up the white bird, who had been fluttering near her, she hid her

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face in its feathers. "How you love that bird, Yuku!"

"Ah, yes, Pierre, and he loves me. He will never fly in at your window again unless I am there, too." She laughed, saucily, lowering her lashes; then her eyes widened childishly, as they always did when she questioned him, and she laid a coaxing hand on his arm.

"Did you kiss her, Pierre, as you say one kisses the person one loves in America? Was it—very nice?"—this with earnest eyes uplifted and the little hand stroking his sleeve.

"I kissed her, yes," he admitted. "She had a pretty mouth, Yuku," he added, slyly. Yuku pouted adorably. "Many people have pretty mouths," she said.

"It was not as pretty as yours, Yuku." Yuku's eyes sparkled and she smiled. "Not so very many girls

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have pretty mouths," she amended, "at least not in Japan. Is mine *really* pretty, Pierre?"

Just what might have happened, with Yuku lifting her rosy lips for inspection, her eyes on his, and Pierre gazing back with his face bent so closely over hers, I cannot take it upon myself to say, but at the psychological moment Elmsley came through the gate and Yuku slipped away into the house, while Pierre strolled to meet his godfather.

When she had given them tea, Yuku brought a small guitar, to Pierre's surprise, and said that she would sing. Pierre had heard Japanese singing, and prepared himself for an ordeal, and gave a start as Yuku, after a couple of chords, broke into a melting negro lullaby, one that he had known and loved all his life:

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“ Who has got de sweetes’ eyes in dis
yer town ?

You is, mah honey ; yes, you is.”

The accent was perfect, the low voice
sweet and full of sympathy—no Jap-
anese voice, that.

“ ‘Case I’s e a-rockin’ you,
Oh-h a-rockin’ you.”

The little figure swayed to the lilting
rhythm. She turned towards her
baby brother, her eyes alight with
tenderness.

Pierre, watching her, felt his eyes
grow strangely dim. There was a
pathetic note in Yuku’s voice, a little
unborn sob, that gripped his heart.
No one spoke when she finished, and
as she raised her eyes to Pierre’s she
saw that she had saddened him.

She lifted her guitar again and

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sang a little Japanese dance song with a laughing chorus. The tender note had gone from her voice now; yet it still haunted Pierre, and he sat silent when she laid her little instrument down, that wistful tone of unshed tears aching in his heart.

Yuku construed his silence differently.

"He is surprised," she cried, merrily. "See, he is speechless with amazement. Is it not so, Pierre?"

"I am, indeed, surprised," Pierre replied, though he did not add that it was Yuku's wonderful appreciation of what she sang that surprised him far more than her knowledge of the Southern song.

"Yet, when you come to think of it," Elmsley's grave voice interposed, "it is not at all astonishing. I discovered Yuku to have a sweet voice and an ear for music. Was it remark-

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able that I should teach her some of the old songs I am fond of?"

"Not at all," laughed Pierre; "but I confess it paralysed me at first, especially because she never speaks English. You have never sung for me before, naughty Yuku."

"I only sing when my dear uncle wishes it," Yuku said, looking at him affectionately. Elmsley looked down at her, and Pierre, glancing at the two faces, was struck by their likeness to each other. It had never occurred to him before, but it flashed across him now, that, save for the saucy little nose, Yuku's face was a soft feminine reproduction, feature for feature, line for line, of Elmsley's. As Pierre gazed, fascinated, Elmsley looked up and their eyes met.

As they walked home together Pierre asked suddenly: "Where did Yuku get that Southern voice of hers,

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and how could she catch the accent so well?" Elmsley was silent for a moment, then said: "If you care to smoke a cigar with me in my rooms this evening I have a little story that may interest you."

"Agreed," replied Pierre; "say nine o'clock?"

"Say nine o'clock," responded the other, and they parted.

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IV.

"I BELIEVE you have said, Pierre," Elmsley pushed the humidor towards his guest and leaned back in his chair; "I believe you have said, Pierre, that it is your belief that the Japanese woman, speaking of the higher classes, has not got it in her to love. You believe that generations of discipline has crushed her individuality and made her incapable of either love or passion in any high sense. More particularly incapable of love. You thought that it would be interesting to make a study in proof or disproof of your theory. Am I right in thinking your ideas have changed somewhat since you met Yuku?"

"Certainly I believe Yuku capable of love, though perhaps not to any

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great extent. But I am convinced that Yuku is not entirely Japanese."

"This conviction only arose to-night, I believe?"

"Just to-night," Pierre replied. "I confess she has rather startled and puzzled me at times, but I thought her motherless state and her constant association with you accounted for her difference from other Japanese women."

"Reason enough, I should say," agreed Elmsley; "but Yuku is a digression. Just at present, in regard to the experimental study we mentioned, I was going to tell you that it has been tried and has proved your theories to be entirely incorrect. I might just add that it was not done in defence of any theory, nor as a psychological experiment."

Elmsley selected a cigar and settled low in his chair.

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"Some years ago," he began, reflectively, "a certain young Kentuckian broke with his people and came out here to Japan, registering a secret vow never to return. In the natural course of events he would have stopped here a year, possibly not so long, and have returned home, heartily sick of his exile. As a matter of fact, he never returned home, though the boyish vow had nothing to do with his remaining. Having made up his mind in the first heat of his anger to become a thorough Japanese, he renounced his native customs and dress and entered into employment in the capacity of private secretary to a Japanese official, a man whose formerly extensive business was slowly going to ruin owing to his utter inability to cope with Western competition. The young Southerner soon found where the fault lay, instituted certain innova-

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tions, and pulled the business up to a higher level than ever before. His employer was one of those gentle old men only found among the Japanese of the old *régime*. He was overcome with gratitude to his secretary, gave him full control, insisted that the young man should make his home his own. The boy, tired of his comfortless hotel (for, in those days, Pierre, the accommodations were frightful), and having become attached to his kindly employer, accepted this offer with alacrity.

“As is common in that society, the wife of this fifty-years-old Japanese was many years his junior, barely twenty, in fact. She was a very beautiful woman, rather tall and slender, with pathetic eyes—very quiet, docile and apparently fond of her husband, but without more knowledge of any strong emotions than a little child. At

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first the young secretary thought of her as he did of all Japanese women, a passive creature, who simply existed to give her husband comfort and keep his house. As his hostess, however, he showed her more attention than at first he cared to, and presently something within her began to make its appeal to him. Sometimes a glance or a tone in her voice, or a quick gesture, revealed the woman under the machine, a certain hidden fire of youth that leaped up to meet his own youth. A vague interest was aroused in the breast of the young American. He began to talk to her more, to watch her, to look for her when he came into the house, and to feel disappointed if she was absent. The husband was pleased that his wife found favor in his friend's eyes, and allowed him an occasion to take her to certain festivals and to the gardens, and to hear

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music. 'You are as my own blood, brother,' he said to him, 'or as my well-loved son. It is right that you should take Koki to such amusements, for you are both young. At my age one ceases to enjoy such things.' If the woman had been of any other nation, she would have foreseen the danger before her and have turned back before it was too late. But she was so unschooled, so young, so wonderfully, terribly, divinely innocent, that her strange, new happiness held no significance for her. There was no instinctive warning, no mother's voice in her being, telling her to beware. Her mother had not known what it was to love, nor her mother's mother, nor her mother's grandmother. Was she to know, as our women are expected to know, by inherited instinct? Was she to appreciate the meaning of that warm, new,

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throbbing interest that had come into her life? Was she to be blamed?"

"But the man?" interrupted Pierre.

"You forget, my dear boy, that in such a case it is the woman who awakens, who is expected to awaken first to the danger. A man may drift for months, unconscious, until the woman reveals him to himself. So it was with the case in point. When at length he did awaken to a full realization of his feelings, he discovered that the girl loved him with all the mad, unreasoning passion of a heart hitherto suppressed and crushed." Elmsley paused.

"He left the house, then, I suppose," Pierre ventured to say.

"He went from the house that morning with the intention of never returning. That night, about twelve, almost against his will, he found him-

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self walking back, intending to stand under her window all night. When he reached the garden he saw her. She was very white, her eyes gleamed, and she had a dagger in her hand, pointed at her own breast."

Pierre started.

"Yes, my dear Pierre, one reads of such things, and says, 'How appalling,' and forgets; but when one sees, actually sees, a beautiful and *innocent* girl, standing under the stars at dead of night, deliberately raising a dagger to bury it in her pure, white heart—ah, well, I scarcely think that many people would blame that young man for leaping over the hedge, snatching the dagger from her suddenly-arrested hand, and taking her into his arms. Her explanation was simple.

"'You would not return, and I cannot live without you.' It is just possible, my dear Pierre, that you

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may condemn the man for his subsequent actions. It is, of course, wholly beside the question, whether you do or not. I merely remark that you probably will. For the secretary returned to the house that night and remained there."

"Beside the question or not," Pierre broke in, "I do condemn the man for beastly ingratitude to the husband. Of the girl herself, and his duty to her, duty to protect her from herself, I say nothing. I don't judge for others in a case of that sort."

"I confess that the thought of the husband sometimes troubled the secretary, yet, after all, what was his sin against him? The old man wanted a gentle, obedient housekeeper, and the young secretary stole nothing of that. All the other—the love, the passion, the utter devotion which the girl gave to the American—her hus-

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band had never asked. It would have embarrassed him beyond measure if she had given it to him, and it may be the younger man felt a sharp resentment against a custom that bound a warm, loving woman to a man who neither understood nor wished for her love, and a fierce determination to give her what, by all the laws of nature, was her due, what in any other civilized country would be her right—a knowledge of love and of joy.”

“I understand that,” Pierre said, softly. “It is that same resentment against Japanese custom that has led me into trying to make Yuku understand.”

Elmsley nodded, and went on: “For two years that household lived on, to all outward seeming, in exactly the old first relationship—through years of such passionate, deep delight for

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two of its members, that the gods grew jealous and the girl—died.

"By the way, Pierre, don't you find the Japanese idea of lighting atrocious? Do me the favor to turn off a few of these switches. One feels like an actor in the limelight. Thanks," as Pierre did so. "I was saying, Pierre, that after two years the girl died. The afternoon before she asked to see her husband's secretary alone; certain words passed between them, unnecessary to be repeated. One thing, however, I will tell you of. There was a baby, a girl, the little life for which she was giving her own, and that dying mother charged him, that if it lived, and if he remained in Japan, he should see to it that that child was taught what it meant to love, as God himself intended that all women should be taught. The man promised her faith-

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fully, and he remained in Japan. The baby lived and grew up a sweet and beautiful girl—the old father, disappointed at having had no sons, married again. The second wife died three years ago, leaving two boys, one an infant in arms; the girl kept house for her father, and when he died, soon afterwards, she continued to live in her old home, caring for her brothers, and relying for help in all her difficulties upon the secretary, who was her guardian.”

“This girl was a favorite with the secretary,” suggested Pierre.

“She was a favorite.”

“He taught her songs, perhaps?”

“It is quite possible that he taught her many things. However, he taught her nothing of love; that is, nothing directly. He considered someone younger, better fitted for the task. In fact, he had a godson.”

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"A godson!" echoed Pierre.
"Surely *he* could not enter into this scheme of things?"

Elmsley smiled. "My dear Pierre, when a man receives a charge from a dying woman whom he worships, he generally wishes to fulfill it to the best of his ability. And this command being that the child should be taught love, he naturally looked about him for the best teacher he could find—who happened to be his godson." Pierre had paled slightly. "The lesson love was not to be followed by the lesson heartbreak, I suppose?"

"By no means, my dear Pierre."

"Then the man made a very grave mistake in choosing his godson as teacher, if only the one lesson were to be given."

"Why so?"

"Simply because there is another

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woman in the case, to whom that godson's heart is given, irrevocably."

"And you think that the elder man has made a mistake? What about the boy himself? Was he compelled to act as he has done? Was he required to teach the girl all that he has? Considering that his heart was not his own to give, has it not been a mistake to steal the girl's affections? Quite as grave a mistake as that of the elder man, who simply made them known to each other, and took no pains to further the acquaintance?"

Pierre gave a quick, uncomfortable laugh. "Of course, I scarcely know why I said that, Elmsley. A man is responsible for his own actions. However, as for the girl's heart, I believe it is still quite intact. She is nothing but a *child*, you know."

"I think you are wrong in that conjecture," Elmsley said, rising;

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"but we shall not discuss it to-night. I asked you here to listen to a story, and I fear I have trespassed unconsciously on your patience. Forgive a prosy old man, Pierre, and good-night."

Out in the glimmering lantern-swung streets, Pierre smiled to himself, "clearly no questions to be asked. What a remarkably graceful way of turning me out."

Far into the night, Pierre sat in the darkness, thinking. So *this* was the reason Elmsley had urged him to come to Japan, had put him in the way of permanent employment, had made him known to Yuku. What a strange man he was, to err, deliberately, without one qualm of conscience, yet to devote the entire rest of his life to the fulfilling of a dead woman's wishes, even to the verge of absurdity. For Pierre could not help

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seeing a grain of the ridiculous in this elaborate plan of his godfather's. A wave of anger swept over the lad. "Yuku and I are just puppets who dance when Elmsley pulls the strings," he cried, and knew even in speaking them that the words were not true. Had Elmsley lifted a finger in the matter, save in creating the opportunity? Pierre had to admit that he had not and realized suddenly that he, Pierre, must be very fond of Yuku. Fonder than he had imagined. And Yuku—for some days Pierre had rather avoided dwelling upon Yuku in his thoughts, for he had had, once or twice, an uncomfortable suspicion that the child was beginning to care for him, rather more than was compatible with the purely platonic regard in which he held her. That his regard *was* platonic he had never till that moment questioned. He was very

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fond of her indeed, but his affection, so he believed, was of the elder-brotherly type.

Whimsically, he pictured Yuku as his wife, and was surprised at the pleasantness of the picture. Yuku his wife! Absurd, surely; yet what a sweet little wife she would make for a man who loved her. How wasted on a Japanese husband! Pierre clenched his hands. "By all the gods she shall not marry a Japanese," he cried aloud. The little dancing figure floated before his eyes. Certainly it would be sweet to have her always with him. So little, so childish, so gentle, with her wondering eyes and her quaint eternal questionings. Why not? Pierre gripped the arms of his chair, suddenly cold. And yet—why not? The other girl was dead to him, more than dead; never, willingly would he ever see her

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again. Then why not accept the gifts life still had to offer? Singularly alone in the world, orphaned, with no ties, Pierre had bound himself willingly to remain in Japan at least for ten years, "and after ten years," Pierre said to himself, "it is not probable that I shall want to go away." He was slowly making friends with the quiet little people of Tokyo, yet he realized how impossible it was for them ever to look upon him save as an alien, and he knew that he would have been intolerably lonely had it not been for Yuku. Then *why not?* *Why not* marry her, bring her to the House of the Open Window to make it home for him? The first rays from the rising sun stole in at the unshuttered window and rested on a photograph which stood by itself on a small wicker tabouret. Pierre's eyes followed the sunbeam, and rested

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where it did, then he rose with a cry: "My God, I can't! I can't!" and threw himself face downwards on his bed, where his soft-footed servant found him, some hours later, asleep and very cold.

That afternoon he met Elmsley, who made no allusion to last evening's conversation, and they walked together to the House of Water Lilies. In the course of conversation over the teacups, Elmsley remarked that the time had come for a long-contemplated journey into the hills where a certain plantation needed his supervision. It appeared that there was a certain promise in regard to this same journey which involved Yuku's making the trip too. It appeared that there was a very old house on the plantation, kept by an old woman, a nurse of Yuku's mother. It appeared, likewise, that she was devoted to Yuku

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and that she cooked the most delicious of little cakes and nobody knew how she did it. Pierre listened, highly diverted by the delight which the girl described these cakes and promised to bring him some. He was glad she was going. It would take her mind from him and when she returned he would see her less often, talk with her less intimately, and by degrees put out those new sweet lights in Yuku's eyes. They were to leave in the morning, going part way by rail and completing the journey in swinging rickshaws, at which thought Yuku clapped her hands, though Elmsley grimly told her to wait until she tried to rise next morning and then see whether she had quite so high an opinion of rickshaw riding over the mountains.

By the following afternoon they were gone, and Pierre, wandering aimlessly past the Water Lily house,

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was struck by the loneliness of it. The cherry blooms had long since fallen and some of the lilies were dead. The paper doors were inhospitably shut and even the boys were not to be seen. Turning away it came to Pierre suddenly, as full realization always will come suddenly, how completely Yuku had filled his life—how inexpressibly dear she had become to him. He put his hand before his eyes as if blinded by that sudden flash of knowledge. Little Yuku. Dear, dear, little Yuku. How terribly deserted the garden was without her. How long the hours till night without a glimpse of her. How very long to-morrow and all the to-morrows till she returned. He laughed, half ashamed. "I didn't know I cared. I'm beginning to think Elmsley may have his wish after all." And Pierre, as he had never before dared to do, conjured up a vision of Yuku in

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his arms, her warm, red lips on his. The hot blood rushed into his heart. Yuku! Yuku held close against his breast, the dark little head on his shoulder, the sweet face against his. He laughed aloud in the quick, glad warmth that shot through all his being. Marry her? Marry her the very day she returned, if she would have it so. Yuku! Yuku! with her deep, deep eyes and her fragrant hair and her silver laugh and that haunting sense of mystery that always hung about her as the odor of incense always hangs in the air of Japan. Yuku with her adorable childish graces and her still more adorable flashes of womanhood. "I think I am going mad," laughed Pierre; "I think I have gone quite mad." A strange, sweet madness, surely, but one better to be shared than enjoyed, alone, and Pierre wondered whether he should

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have strength of mind sufficient not to follow Yuku by the very next train and bear her bodily back.

The next morning, however, brought with it much that was practical and calculated to soothe his transports—among other things a letter from home which caused him to laugh heartily and then to frown and then to laugh again. The letter was from one Nancy Becket, Irish, his mother's nurse, and his own after "mammy" had died; and it was to the effect that Nancy, considering it her appointed task to look after Master Pierre, and having heard that he intended remaining in Japan indefinitely, was coming, with her husband Barney, to see just how he was situated and possibly to take up her abode in his house.

"Just the thing," Pierre cried, when he had finished laughing and

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frowning, "I'll feel that there is someone to rely on now to take care of Yuku, because it's a terrible risk, my taking that child and promising to care for her, when I know just nothing about little girls."

So a cablegram was dispatched in due haste to the honest Mrs. Becket, urging her immediate presence, which soon brought an answer (collect), stating that Nancy and her husband would arrive within two months or so, an earlier departure being impossible, since Barney had certain affairs to "wind up"—a message for which Pierre paid, musing on the limited intelligence which will enter into explanations via cable.

Then—a few more days of almost uncontrollable longing—a few more nights when sanity departed and gave place to that dreamy, mad, joyous anticipation—and at last one dusky,

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mysterious evening when it was no longer a dream, but a warm, living reality—when Yuku, Yuku herself, lay in his arms and crushed her soft, red lips to his—when he felt her slender arms locked tightly behind his head, and, bending her backward, drank deep delight from her glowing eyes—when the strange, sweet madness was in them both and heaven and earth came together, when Yuku first kissed Pierre.

Oh, the wonderful, wonderful days that followed. Days when the skys were blue and the water bluer and they sailed in quaint-rigged little boats far over the rippling, dancing, laughing waves, while the sun shone in Yuku's eyes and made them jewels, and the breeze blew little curls about her face. Days when Yuku was taught what it meant to love and to be loved, and grew prettier with the knowledge.

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Days of joyous sailing, of long, slow walks in the twilight, and best, most wonderful of all, those evenings in the garden—when the odor from a thousand flowers lay heavy in the air, and Yuku lay close in Pierre's arms as he sat in his old place on the vine-twined bench by the lily pool, while the skies grew dark and the stars came out, and the fireflies darted through the warm, sweet air in and out from the dusky patches of the shadowy trees—when they two seemed alone in the world as they kissed and kissed and kissed.

Sometimes—it was inevitable—the thought of the other girl arose in Pierre's heart. Sometimes he gazed at her picture (for he still kept it before him) and a bitter regret cried out within him. Sometimes, when Yuku sang her quaint melodies to him, he thought of the thrillingly beautiful voice the other girl had possessed—

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the voice that had held him enchained many and many a time, and then a longing came upon him that Yuku were not herself, but that other, for the pain was still alive in his heart, and Pierre, poor, foolish Pierre, half unconsciously, half jealously, hugged it close, nurtured it. Nevertheless, in all these thoughts he was never untrue to Yuku. The greater the pain within, the stronger seemed to grow his affection for the Japanese girl. She should be his comfort, his dear little wife, true and sweet and loving. He should make her very happy and she would never know of the moments of secret anguish he endured when something occurred to bring the past suddenly back to him. When those regrets came he threw himself with so much the greater abandon into the enchantments Yuku offered, for Yuku appealed to his senses and he found

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intoxication in her warm, sweet, fragrant presence. Sometimes he thought that this passion was all that he could ever give to Yuku, that the other, the spiritual, the real love was hopelessly given to the other, then in a sudden revulsion of feeling he hated that other girl and was sure that Yuku alone was in his heart. "If I only knew," he said to himself.

He tried, God and the stars on many a silent night knew how he tried, to put Yuku first, or failing that at least to come to some definition of his feelings, and always the result was in those three despairing words, "I don't know." He knew that if he could see the girl again he would know for a surety whether he still cared or whether it was imagination and the habit of believing that he must, but this he dared not do; dared not, because in his heart of hearts he be-

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lieved that she still held first place in his love and that Yuku, little Yuku, was second to her. However, if the truth be known, he suffered comparatively little, less than he imagined, indeed, and each day made Yuku dearer to him, each day he wrapped up a little more of his life in hers, thought of her all the time and lived in a dream of pleasure while the summer sped away. A chain of glowing days and mysteriously lovely nights, days of sunshine and flowers and blue skies, and nights of dusky shadows, darting fireflies, heavy incense-breathing air. They were to be married in the Fall, after the chrysanthemums festival. Pierre had begged that it might be sooner, but Yuku, supported by Elmsley, had been firm. The two little boys were the cause of the delay, for they were to be placed in school in Yoko-

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hama, a Japanese school conducted on English lines. It did not open until after the flower fête and Yuku had been unwilling to leave the children alone when they had so little time to be at home—for she and Pierre were to have a real American “honey-moon.” Were to take one of the quaint-sailed ships and sail away to one of the farthest islands, and Yuku was to be initiated into the mysteries of camping—a mode of life which secretly she rather dreaded, or would have if she had not been accompanying Pierre. For Yuku was being shown so many new customs that she was a little overwhelmed and just a little afraid.

When they returned they were to live in the House of the Pool of Water Lilies — Elmsley’s wedding gift — while Elmsley had agreed to take over

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the House of the Open Window, it being impossible, even now, to live for very long in a Japan hotel without becoming sick and tired of it. So it had all been appointed and arranged.

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V.

YUKU was standing by the lily pool, tossing bits of rice cake to the goldfish, and Pierre lay on the grass, idly watching her, one late afternoon, when Elmsley entered the garden, saying that he had received a cable desiring his immediate presence in London on very important business. "The 'Scylla' sails to-morrow by happy chance," he added. Yuku dropped all her rice cake at once into the pool, thereby imperilling the digestions of several small, greedy fish, and turned to her guardian, her face pink with distress. "But you will be away, you will be away when—when I—" what a shy little Yuku, when she saw Pierre's eyes upon her.

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“ Away when you are married? Yes, my child, I am afraid I shall, but such matters cannot be helped. You may be assured I will return as quickly as possible, however. “ Now, dear,” he added, smoothing her hair and speaking in softened tone that only Yuku could command, “ There is no need at all for those tears. Run into the house and brush them away while I speak to Pierre.” Pierre had risen and the two men walked to the farther end of the garden, while Yuku ran into the house and cried a little, and looked at a certain face in a certain locket and laughed a little, and looked at her own face in a tiny mirror and stuck a pink blossom wickedly over her left ear and ran into the garden where Pierre and Elmsley were waiting for her.

The next morning Elmsley had gone, and the next day was the festi-

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val of flowers. It was held, this year, in the open gardens, and Pierre, entering through the bamboo gates (for the directors had enclosed the gardens for this night with a temporary fence), was struck by the fairy beauty of the scene. The gardens were quaint, filled with long, straight rows of trees which lined the paths on either side, and they, the paths, were hung across with lanterns, the supporting wires which stretched from tree to tree hidden by festoons of flowers and trailing vines; chrysanthemums were everywhere. In the centre of the enclosure, where all the paths met, was a fountain and they had banked it about with the great shaggy blooms, yellow and pink and white and red. All along the paths the skillful little workmen had placed cluster after cluster of the same flowers, cunningly arranged in the

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earth so that they appeared to be growing there. Every man carried bunches of them as he walked about, tossing them at the geisha girls and formally presenting them to the girls of his own caste. Every dainty little woman had her arms filled with them, for it was the ambition of each pretty girl to have the greatest number of flowers by the end of the evening. Yuku explained this to Pierre and he at once took her to one of the stalls at the gate and bought her so many flowers that she could scarcely carry them. Pierre could scarcely tear his eyes from her this evening; little, dainty creature that she was, clad in the palest of pink silk kimonas, with a fluffy, pinky-white chrysanthemum bow on either side of her dark head, her little face, pink-cheeked and shining-eyed, just seen above the great cluster of pink and white

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chrysanthemums Pierre had given her.

There were here, as there will be found at any similar gathering in any part of the world, several groups of Americans, and Pierre, glancing them over idly, wondering if he might not see some old friends, felt his heart suddenly thump so hard that it gave him physical pain. Just for one moment he had imagined himself face to face with Her, the girl of his dreams; another glance showed his folly, the girl confronting him was taller, fairer, not in the least like now, when she came into the light of the lanterns. Only a moment before, Pierre had been sure, so sure, that Yuku, lovely little Yuku, was all that he desired on earth, had felt that he loved her above all the world, and now—a sudden faintness seized Pierre, a sudden loathing of the lights and the laughter

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and the Japanese music in the centre of the garden, and whispering to Yuku he led her into one of the side-paths from which, as they discovered, innumerable other little paths branched out. These walks were almost deserted, for it was still early in the evening, and it was quiet here. Walking slowly down the shadowy isles of pine trees in the dim sweet air, where even the occasional lanterns seemed placed only to emphasize the soft, warm darkness; with the subtle odor of incense stealing into his senses, mingled with the breath of hidden flowers, while the fireflies danced among the trees and darted across the path, with the sound of sweet foreign laughter coming faintly, mistily as from far away, and the glimpse now and again of a tiny kimoned figure, hurrying through the vine-caught trees—this—the dreamy unreality of

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it all and the sensuous sweetness and darkness and warmth crept into Pierre's being and abandoning himself wholly to the influences of this Japanese night, he stopped in a spot where the trees were deep and took Yuku into his arms.

Some time afterwards, when perhaps an hour or two had elapsed and when Yuku's flowers were being scattered at her feet, the chrysanthemums in her hair hung limp and disordered, Pierre pulled out his watch and laughingly declared the hour. "I must take you home at once, sweetheart," he said, stooping for one last kiss, then—"Oh, Yuku, Yuku, see what I have done to your hair! If you appear in the crowd like this there'll be a terrible scandal." And amid such teasing and laughter Yuku slipped a wee mirror from one of her sleeves and proceeded to repair the

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havoc Pierre had wrought. As they stood there, hidden by the bushes, a party of American people came towards them, and Pierre saw again the girl who had so startled him, and caught again, in the half-light, that striking likeness. He stood very still when they had passed and Yuku was forced to touch him twice before he turned to her.

"Ready, little one?" He smiled into her upturned face, but with all a girl's quickness, Yuku saw the strained look in his eyes. "Pierre! what has hurt you?" "Hurt me, Yuku? Nothing dear."

"Something has," insisted Yuku, then, with sudden divination, "Pierre, you looked after those people who just passed. Do you know any of them?" and Pierre, marvelling at the child's perception and thinking at that moment only of his own pain,

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told her the truth. Told her the truth—and would have stood a better chance of heaven if he had told her the blackest of lies.

“One of those women, Yuku, reminded me very strongly of a girl—one whom I told you about.” No need for Yuku to ask what girl. “And that has brought this look into your eyes?” “Yes, Yuku, if any look of pain is in my eyes, that has brought it.”

“But why? you yourself told me that your love for her was dead.” Yuku’s voice was not her own, but Pierre scarcely noticed.

“Oh, I know I did, but it wasn’t true. At least, I don’t think it was true. I don’t know—oh, I don’t know.”

“You don’t know? You must know.” Still that sharp edge in Yuku’s voice. “I don’t. If I could

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only *see* her, Yuku. If I just dared to see her again, I would know. But I dare not, Yuku. I couldn't."

"Pierre, you are speaking nonsense. You love or you do not love." Strange, how the child had disappeared—how, all in a moment, a woman stood before Pierre, speaking as he had never thought to hear her.

"You love or you don't love, Pierre; answer me."

"Yuku, Yuku, I can't tell. Help me, sweetheart."

"I can't help you, Pierre, I need help myself to understand you. Why have you come to me this way if you still love her?"

"Yuku," cried Pierre, stung by the misery in her voice which all her power could not subdue. "Yuku, little love, little comfort." Yuku thrust out her hands before her. "Don't touch me, Pierre. Oh, I understand.

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You thought to forget, with me. Is it not so? Yes, I see it is so. You would have married me and been true to me; .oh, I believe that, but you should all the time have loved someone else more. Pierre," her voice lowered, scornfully, "you made one mistake. You should not have taught me so much about love. Should not have made me understand, then I might not have read your eyes, or reading, might not have cared. But you did teach me and now I know what it is to be loved, to be first, and I can't—I can't be second in your heart, Pierre—I—can't—bear it." She broke off, hiding her face in her long sleeve and all her slender body quivered with sobs, sobs that seemed to tear her heart, yet brought no tears.

Maddened by her pain, Pierre caught her to himself, but she

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wrenched herself away and stood before him with flaming eyes.

"Yuku," he begged, "little Yuku, won't you let me hold you in my arms—comfort you?"

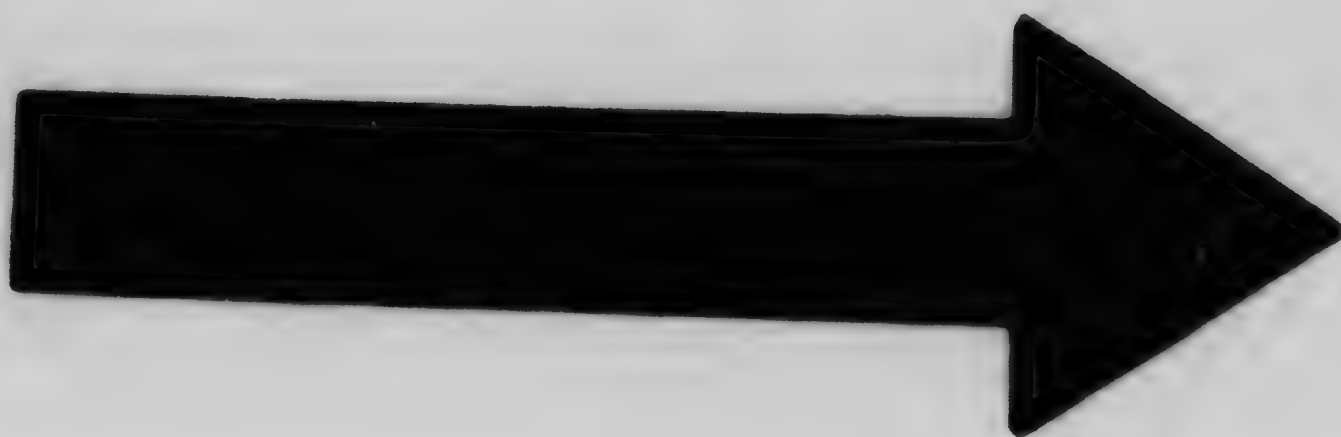
"Comfort me! Your touch burns me, Pierre."

"Oh, Yuku," the man was in agony for her anguish.

"Come to me, lie here on my heart and let me make it up to you."

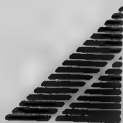
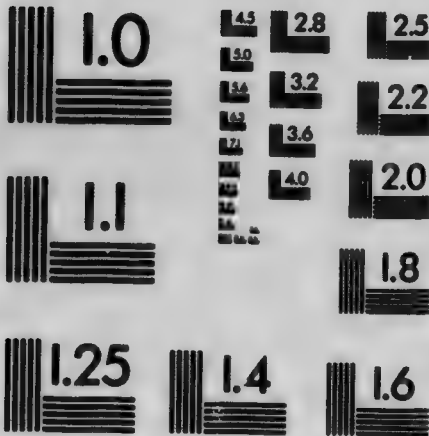
Yuku stared at him in utter amazement, then broke into a peal of high laughter, and stepping close to him said in her pretty French, "You think, Monsieur, that a woman who wants a man's love cares to be offered his caress as consolation? If I did not know you are young and therefore a fool, I should consider that an insult."

This time it was Pierre who stared, wondering whether Yuku had chang-



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ed personalities with some "belle dame de Paris." For Pierre was young and he did not know that when a girl's heart breaks, she finds many sharp poisoned little arrows of words within her, of whose existence she has been so far quite unconscious—weapons which Mother Nature, well knowing that they will be needed, has placed deep down, for just such times as these. So Pierre stood still, a healthy but uncomfortable conviction awakening within him that this slim, defiant little creature was no child after all and that he had marvellously discounted her powers of feeling and of fine discernment.

"Are you never going to forgive me, Yuku?"

"I am not going to marry you, Pierre."

"You *shall* marry me, Yuku. This is ridiculous. I love you dearly and I

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shall make you happy. You *must* marry me—why, Yuku, I could not live without you now.”

“ I shall not.”

“ You shall, Yuku. Why, little girl, foolish little girl, you love me. Do you think you can live without me?” But he had not yet fathomed how utterly Yuku’s heart was broken—how deadly was her hurt. With a reckless little laugh she cried: “ Pierre, Pierre, you were not wise. You made me as an American girl—yes. More pleasant, perhaps, but you would have been wiser to have bought me. You should have come, as a Japanese man would have come, and paid my uncle so much money, and then you could have said: ‘ You shall,’ and I should be forced to do your will. But you have made me an American girl, Pierre, and one does not say ‘ You

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shall ' to her. Ah, Pierre, poor foolish one, I fear you were not wise."

"Yuku," Pierre caught the mocking, pointing little hands, and forced them to her sides. "Do you know that is the deepest insult you can give me? Yuku, do you want to kill me? Do you hate me?"

"I do not hate you, Pierre, I am not myself to-night. As you know well, I love you. It is useless to deny it. But I cannot marry you, Pierre, and I ask you now to take me home." There was a pathetic dignity in her tone not to be withstood and Pierre quietly lifted the branches for her to pass under and led her by the least frequented ways to the gates. He put her in her ginrickshaw and got in beside her. No word was spoken between them, and when they reached the House of the Pool where Lilies float, he lifted her gently down and

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still silently gave her in charge of her old servant. "Good night, Pierre."

"Good night, Yuku."

"You have enjoyed our worthless fête, honorable?" inquired old Senten of Pierre, who was a favorite with her. "It was a most beautiful sight, Senten."

"Yes, yes," chuckled the old woman, "when I was young I, too, enjoyed the festival of flowers and the giving of chrysanthemums, one to another, this one for hope, this one for promise, this for joy; but, Yuku, where are your flowers? Do you come from the fête with empty hands?"

"My flowers are withered, Senten, so withered that they can never bloom again."

"And so you left them. Quite right. Old flowers are not wanted."

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But you have brought one, after all," catching sight of a small starlike blossom which Yuku had pinned over her heart.

"Yes," said Yuku, as she gathered the skirts of her kimono together, preparing to enter the house. "They call it the flower of love. It is withered, too, but I shall keep it. Good night, a second time, Pierre," and the thin door closed on the girl and her garrulous old attendant.

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VI.

PIERRE walked home in a dream. "I shall not marry you." Over and over the words repeated themselves till they grew meaningless in his ears. Yuku! Yuku! all his being cried out to her. What if he did not love her quite as he loved the other? Yuku was to have been his comfort, his sweet forgetfulness, and he would have made her happy. That was the cruelest part. For in justice be it said, Pierre's heart ached more for her than for himself. "She is suffering needlessly," he cried aloud, yet he was beginning to understand, to realize that Yuku could not have done otherwise, loving him so.

Arriving home and dismissing his small servant, Pierre mechanically

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threw off coat and collar and slipping on a dressing gown threw himself down in his one big chair by the window. His coat he had flung across his bed and he saw now that two or three crushed chrysanthemum petals, which had evidently been caught in his lapel, had fluttered to the ground. He stooped and picked them up, his breath catching. Little Yuku's flowers. Little Yuku? "My God, how could she change so?" It was incredible, and then there dawned on him the perception how very deep must have been the hurt that could effect such a change. "I thought she loved me as a child loves, passionately, indeed, but I had no conception," and then it came to him, suddenly, how very precious that love of Yuku's was and how much it meant to possess it. Pierre stretched out his hands to the open window. "Yuku! Yuku!" he

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cried hoarsely, "I want you, I need you, oh, my dear, my dear." A gust of wind swept through the open window and a photograph fell clattering to the floor. Pierre picked it up and gazed at it. "If I could tell Yuku that I loved her and only herself," he sighed. "But I cannot lie to her. And I can't root out the other from my heart. A man *can't* love like that twice, but Yuku could never understand. If she could, she'd come to me and I should find my soul and my lost faith and my shattered ideals again in her sweet love." He leaned from the window, straining his eyes in the direction of her home, then a sudden, terrible thought occurred to him and he rushed from the house.

That night, when old Senten had left her and gone to bed, a little figure came into the garden of the lily pool, and walked there, hour after hour

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with tireless steps, stopping at last by the vine-twined bench and throwing herself on the ground beside it and stretching her arms out over it as if she would hold it close against her breast, and so remaining motionless till dawn. And that same night, lying hidden on the outerside of the hedge, a man kept watch of her. Never for a moment did he take his eyes from that slender, white figure, putting out his arms to her in dumb entreaty when she walked away from him, crouching lower when she came close to his hiding place, clenching his hands and starting up as if ready to spring over the hedge when she stopped, as she occasionally did and gazed into the clear depths of the pool. And when at last he saw her lay her white face upon that part of the bench where he had always sat, great, tearless sobs shook the man's whole body and he

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twisted his hands in the vines of the hedge to keep himself from going to her. For that new understanding of Pierre's told him that just now to have Pierre's arms around her in pity, though a world of affection might mingle in that pity, would be more than Yuku could bear.

Not until daylight, when Yuku arose and went unsteadily into the house, did that silent watcher leave his post. Then with a great grief in his heart, but with a great relief as well, Pierre went home, knowing now that Yuku would not attempt her life, as he had at first feared she, in her maddened state might do.

Pierre did not go near the House of the Water Lilies next day. The children leaving for school that afternoon, Yuku would have sufficient excuse for denying herself to him. But the following day, he argued, would

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be a lonely one for the girl, and Pierre thought that by that time she might consent to receive him. For Pierre well knew the gentle, yielding nature, and realizing, as never before he had realized, the depth of her love for him, he believed that if he could persuade her to see and to talk to him, he could persuade her to be good to them both.

But a fresh disappointment, as well as a fresh proof of Yuku's determination, awaited him at the House of the Water Lilies. Yuku had gone away. Had gone up into the country to her old nurse. Had left early that morning and had given no reason for her departure, so the aggrieved Senten told him.

"Did she go alone?" Pierre inquired.

She had gone, it appeared, with no other escort than that of her two gin-rickshaw men. And Senten had hon-

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orably implored that she might accompany her instead, for it was not well that a young girl should travel alone even with such old and trusted servants, but she had been refused. Perhaps Pierre san might have had experience of the extremely strong will of Yuku san?

"I have," Pierre said, grimly. "Did Yuku san say when you were to expect her back?"

"Honorable, she said nothing;" the old woman wrung her hands. "She seems so strange and I fear that she does not intend to return for many weeks. A boy goes to-morrow to carry her much apparel. It is not for an old servant to see or to speak and I beg of you to pardon me if I am overbold, but, oh, Pierre san, has something come amiss between you? Is there to be no wedding?"

Pierre put his hand gently on the

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old creature's shoulder. "Don't wail so, Senten," he said kindly, "Everyone about will hear you. Certainly there will be a wedding, a little later than we had planned. Yuku san is upset over her uncle's departure and this first parting from her brothers. She wishes, naturally, a little time in the country, that she may become stronger. Remember this, Senten, if anyone questions you."

"I will remember, honorable." Pierre smiled at her.

"You said that a boy was taking some things to her to-morrow?"

"It is even so. I was in the act of packing some kimono's of plain material when I heard your condescending knock upon our unworthy doors."

"Then I shall bring you a letter to put in with those plain kimono's, to-morrow," and nodding pleasantly to the old woman, Pierre strode away.

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VII.

So! Yuku had gone away. Gone up into the hills. He thought of her, little, unhappy girl, taking her grief up into that far retreat.

"The child will go mad up there alone with only that old nurse," groaned Pierre. Writing to her he said, simply, "Yuku, my heart is breaking with loneliness and longing for you. Will you come back to me?"

The House of the Open Window seemed more solitary than ever that evening, and Pierre dropped into the new American hotel, where he found, in the billiard room, several young New Yorkers, who hailed him as a fellow-countryman and pressed him to join them. Pierre did join them, playing recklessly and feverishly, half

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through the night, losing all his games and some money and being in consequence voted a regular good fellow.

And the next morning Pierre glanced at his calendar and uttered an exclamation. "By all the powers, I had forgotten Nancy. This is the day I'm to meet them," and having reported at his office and obtained leave of absence, Pierre betook him to the pier. The "City of Tokyo" was just making her dock when he got there and Pierre looked swiftly from one face to another as the passengers crowded to the deck railings. He had just given up in despair when the sight of a green umbrella waved frantically in his direction caused him to look up and then snatch off his cap and wave it, laughing and nodding towards a small grey-haired woman in a long green cloak and astonishing hat, and a tall man with a fierce bandit's mous-

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tache and a mane of shaggy, black hair.

It seemed hours to Pierre, watching them, and knowing by the movement of Nancy's lips that she was telling him all about the trip, and quite unable to hear a word she said, but at last the gangway had been hoisted, and had been hoisted again amid much advice from the bystanders and the people had crowded to the gate and had been forced back, and the doctor, the smallest man in Japan, had run up the gangplank and had conferred with the captain and had been dissatisfied with the report and had gone below frowning and had reappeared smiling and had run down the gangway again and the gate was lifted and the people (who by this time were in that state of frenzy that any more delay would have caused them to hurl themselves bodily from

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the decks) began to pour down onto the wharf.

“Nancy!” Pierre took her two outstretched hands in one of his and gave his other to her husband. Nancy pulled her hands away and took his face between her hands and looked at him with a long, searching gaze. “There,” she said, giving him a great kiss and almost putting out one of his eyes with the feather of the astonishing hat. “Barney, why don’t you say something to Master Pierre,” turning away her head with a little catch in her breath, for she had read that in Pierre’s eyes which hurt.

“My dooty, sir, and hopes I see you well,” said the fierce-looking Barney, in a voice startlingly soft and musical.

“Why, thanks, Barney, I’m feeling pretty fit, or shall be now that you and Nancy have come to take care of me.”

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"And it's care you need and care you'll get, Master Pierre," cried Nancy, speaking severely to atone for her previous emotion, "Though I'm sure we'll all be murdered in our beds yet in this heathen place. But I said to Barney: 'Our dooty lies in looking after Master Pierre, and if he won't come home we must go out to him.'"

"I never can thank you enough," smiled Pierre, but at least I can assure you that you'll never be murdered in Japan. Now let's get out of this. If you'll give your checks to this boy he'll get your luggage through. This way," and Pierre led them through the noisy crowd to where two rickshaws were waiting. "Do we ride in those?" inquired Barney, a little blankly. "Why, yes, I'm afraid you must," replied Pierre. Nancy said nothing, settling into her place with the air of one who had come to the

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country from a stern sense of duty and was resolved to do that duty thoroughly, even though it comprised her riding in a strange conveyance which had all the appearance of being about to tip backwards upon the slightest provocation, and which was drawn by a barelegged and much dreaded "heathen."

Arrived at the House of the Open Window, Chuchu, Pierre's valet, undertook to show them the kitchens and the garden and the bedroom which they would occupy. Pierre, in his own room, was sorting some letters which the captain had handed to him, when Nancy appeared at the door, presenting a most woebegone countenance. "If you please, Master Pierre, are we to sleep on the floor, with a block of wood for a pillow?" Pierre sprang up with an expression of deep contrition. "I'm so sorry, Nancy.

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Of course, I can get you a bed and should have done so to-day or yesterday, rather, if I had not been so frightfully busy these last few days. You and Barney may take this room for to-night and I'll run up to the hotel."

So it happened that Pierre met again the young Americans, of whom one suggested that they go to watch the Geisha girls who danced that evening. Pierre, in dread of a lonely evening, joined them, as many a young man in the recklessness of disappointment has joined in less creditable excursions than that, although he did not care about the faster type of men these represented, and although he knew that he was a foolish boy to start in this way, rushing straight to excitements to drown the hurting in him, it so fell out, however, that one of the graceful dancers re-

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mindful Pierre of Yuku, and questioning one of his new friends as to her name, he was rewarded with the story of the girl's life in detail, and left the theatre in a blaze of indignation against the system which made such things possible, and against the people who took advantage of that same system, and against himself for ever having gone to the place. For the girl—that girl—looked like Yuku. And the girl—that girl—had been of as gentle parentage as Yuku herself and as guarded in her childhood until the plague had taken her parents from her, and poverty—that awful poverty which only the Japanese know, had brought to the Geisha. And Pierre vowed there and then, so long as Yuku lived that he never would leave Japan, pledging himself to care for and protect. And thus it happened that Pierre did not join the Ameri-

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could any more, but stayed at home, talking sometimes with Nancy and her husband; and sometimes, after dusk, walking up to the House of the Pool where Lilies float, he would go into the garden and stay there long into the night, for of late days it had become very hard for him to sleep.

Nancy, with the adaptability of her race and sex, had settled down as Pierre's housekeeper as naturally as if she had never lived anywhere else, her fear of the natives gradually changing into admiration of the excellent servants they made. Barney, indeed, had been rather at a loss, at first, there being no horses to take charge of, until Pierre, racking his brain, was seized with an inspiration, and Barney soon afterwards entered into negotiations with certain small men, regarding the building of stables on a piece of land behind the Water

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Lily house, stables to be filled, upon completion, with horses which Barney himself would go back to Kentucky to procure.

So the weeks went on, and each week Pierre sent Yuku a message, but after the first time, when Yuku had written to him just four words, "I will not come," there never was any answer for him, and the loneliness grew apace as the days grew short and the nights grew long and Pierre found more and more difficulty in that matter of sleeping; sometimes he felt that he must go mad as hour after hour left him staring wakefully into the darkness, and at last he began to cast about for some means of enforcing sleep. For this second blow Pierre had not taken well. It seemed as though he could not bear up against it. Elmsley was still away and could not tell when he should return and

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Pierre half longed, half dreaded to see him, dreading to tell him the mischief he had done, yet thinking that possibly Elmsley's words might weigh with Yuku and bring her back—poor, little, mistaken, heart-broken Yuku.

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VIII.

"YUKU SAN;" an old woman trotted into the old garden and peered into the gathering twilight.

"I am here, my nurse."

"Your rice is prepared and I have baked the little cakes and something else, too, which I will not tell you." Yuku came slowly towards her old nurse and put her arms about the old woman's neck. "Kind Haru," she said, "You are too good to me." She hid her face for a moment on the broad shoulder and the woman gently smoothed her soft hair. After a moment Yuku raised her head and smiling brightly, said, "Come, let us go in, for I am all impatience to see this wonderful surprise you have made for

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me. Why *Haru!*" For at Yuku's forced gaiety the old woman had broken down and stood sobbing with her hands over her face. Yuku pulled her hands away. "Stop!" she commanded, "Stop, Haru."

"Oh, my child, my little peach-blossom, my wild cherry bloom," moaned the old nurse, "To think we used to call you little Lady Laughter, long ago." A quiver ran through Yuku's frame and she stamped her little foot. "Stop speaking so, Haru," she cried. "See, I am laughing now, and I shall laugh all the time if you wish it," and Yuku did laugh, a laugh that brought fresh tears to Haru's eyes.

"I had rather you cried, little one," she said. For Yuku had not cried since she left the House of the Water Lilies, and Haru feared for her. "Cried," echoed Yuku, "why should

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I cry? No, no, Haru. I am not sad. I tell you I am *not* sad and you shall not cry and make me so. I am laughing and you shall laugh." She caught the old woman by the arm, fairly shaking her in her excitement. "Laugh, Haru, if you love me, laugh. We *shall* be merry," and with tears streaming down her withered cheeks, Haru laughed.

That night, when the old nurse slept, Yuku rose from her hard bed, and throwing on a warm wrap, stole out into the garden, a strange weird place where weeds ran wild and thick vines twisted, preying upon the trees, and coarse grass grew rank. Here, night after night, Yuku walked, fighting out a battle in her soul. That very morning a messenger had come bringing her a note from Pierre. She held it now in her hands and pressed it

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against her heart as if it could still the aching there.

“ Oh, little Yuku, come back. All day and night my heart is calling to you. The sun has not shone since you left and all the light has gone out of my life. The window is always open. Will the little White Bird never fly in again ?” To go back. To go to him, to comfort him, to love him—there were moments when it seemed as if Yuku’s heart would tear itself from her body in that wild impulse to go back. Moments when nothing seemed worth while save Pierre’s happiness, when she could have thrown herself at his feet and gladly let him trample on her if it could have given him any pleasure to do so. Moments when she found herself actually at the gates of the plantation, found herself in the very act of going to Pierre, moments when in an ecstasy of self-

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surrender she had written him passionate letters, telling him to come to her, to take her, to let her be with him whether he loved her or no, that all she asked in life was to be near him, to comfort him if she could, to serve him, always. But those moments passed and those letters were never sent and the wild wish was killed by the cruelly cold thought: "He loves some one else best and I cannot be second, because I love him so." For it seemed to Yuku that the very greatness of her love for Pierre made it impossible for her to marry him while he held the other woman first in his heart.

Sometimes even this feeling was transcended by the other, the longing, at whatever cost, to go back. Sometimes Yuku felt that she could bear even that, could be happy in the tender affection he undoubtedly gave her,

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even though that old remembrance still held its sway. She was passing through one of these moments now as she paced the garden with quick, uneven steps. "Pierre, Pierre, Pierre," she whispered. "I will go to you, I will go, nothing in the world matters but your happiness. I can give it to you. Oh, Pierre, to think that I have hurt you, too; forgive me, darling, darling, for I love you, I love you; oh, I love you." A sudden change swept across her face. "Oh, Pierre, *I love you*," she half shrieked, in a terrified sort of voice. "I love you—and you love her best. You—love—her. Oh, Pierre, Pierre, Pierre." The thought of the other girl rose in Yuku's mind. "I hate her," she cried, passionately, "I could kill her, I could tear her in pieces. Oh he shan't love her, he *can't* love her—he—*does* love her. Pierre, my heart is breaking for you,

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but I can't—I can't—oh, it hurts, Pierre, it hurts, it is—killing—me—oh, I want you, but I *can't go back.*" Up and down, up and down, went the shaking little figure, and up and down in the dark room behind the open window walked Pierre.

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IX.

"BARNEY!" Nancy pulled at her husband's shoulder.

"What's the matter?"

"Do you hear Master Pierre walking again?"

"Yes," replied her husband, laconically. "He does it night after night, Barney. There's something wrong with Master Pierre."

"There is that," agreed Barney, the brief.

"He's getting thin," Nancy went on, "and he stays out whole nights, often and often, and when he's in he walks up and down like this sometimes till morning."

"I know all that," said Barney.

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"Well, what are you going to do about it?" snapped Nancy.

"Me do about it? I'm going to be kept awake all night or else stuff my ears with cotton if Master Pierre persists in tramping about his room this way," Barney retorted in a musical growl.

"And I," said his wife, "am going in to find out once for all what ails my boy."

"For a married female," Barney observed, "to enter an unmarried man's room, *in* a red dressing gown at two o'clock in the morning—" but Nancy withered him with a look, and Barney subsided beneath the bed-clothes.

Pierre threw up his hands with a hopeless gesture. "There's nothing for it," he sighed. "A man's got to sleep." He stooped over his table and baring his wrist lifted the hypodermic

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needle, when there was a cry from the doorway. "Not that, Master Pierre, oh, not that," and Nancy Becket rushed across the room and threw her arms about the tense young figure.

"Sit down, Master Pierre; come, please, and let me talk to you."

Pierre, all of whose strength seemed suddenly to have deserted him, let her lead him to the chair, and as he sank wearily into it, Nancy, on her knees beside him, pressed his head down on her breast, stroking his hair and murmuring little broken words of tenderness, crooning over him as if he were a child. And Pierre, partly because it was strangely comforting to himself, partly to please her, let her pet him and cry over him to her heart's content. For Pierre was very weary, and very far from well. Presently he lifted his head and looked at her with a smile, half ashamed, wholly

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wistful. "A sad baby, am I not, Nancy? How did you happen to come in, by the way?"

"I heard you walking, Master Pierre, as I have heard you night after night, and I couldn't bear it any longer."

"Have I disturbed you, Nancy? I had forgotten how ridiculously thin these walls are."

"And who should be disturbed if not your old nurse that loves you so well," cried Nancy, fondly. Pierre took her hand gently. "You are the best friend I have and always will be, and you came, as you always do, just when you were needed. But you must go back to bed now, I have let you stay too long."

"Master Pierre," Nancy said, suddenly, "I know."

"You know, Nancy?" echoed Pierre, interrogatively.

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Nancy nodded. "I'd scorn to be a gossip, Master Pierre, but when I consider it my duty to find out anything, I'll use whatever means present themselves. I've asked Chuchu, the only servant who can speak English, how long this has been going on, your walking the floor all night, and he told me."

"Told you, Nancy?"

"Told me all he knew. Told me you had been going to marry some Yuku san and that she had run away somewhere and that you were slowly pining away with grief, and he says that he and the other servants curse this girl in their prayers every night."

"Oh, Nancy! better to curse me, better far, to curse me," and Pierre, unwilling that this injustice should be done, told Nancy the true version, though an hour ago he would have scouted the possibility of his ever dis-

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cussing Yuku with anyone, not excepting his good nurse.

"But, Master Pierre," Nancy said, when he had finished and she had discovered, by skilful questions, where the house was situated where Yuku now was. "But, Master Pierre, this is no way to face trouble," pointing significantly to the table. "I know it," Pierre replied, gravely, "but, Nancy, I can't seem to stand up under this. Perhaps it's the loneliness or the quiet life—perhaps I really am not well. Be that as it may, I haven't slept naturally since—she — went away. I nearly went mad before I resorted to this. I despise my own weakness, and God knows I fight it. I promise you, though, that I won't touch it to-night. I never, never, would touch it again if only—Oh, Yuku, Kuku—" he laid his head on his arm as he stood leaning against the

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windows, and Nancy, after gently touching the dear bowed head, went quietly out of the room. And Pierre, falling into a troubled sleep just before daylight, awoke unrefreshed, and tempted to wish he had not wakened at all, for Pierre was ill, not only in spirit, but physically as well. The House of the Open Window was in the very heart of the city, and Pierre had lived there through the summer and through early fall without change, and now that the damp, bad weather was coming on, malaria was fastening on the boy with slow, poisoning fingers, making him languid and miserable and apt to find every action an effort. He did not realize that he was ill; he only knew that he wanted Yuku intolerably and that he simply didn't seem able to live without her. "And that she will come back," Pierre said to-day, "I have

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given up all hope. Poor little girl." It was characteristic of Pierre that he never for an instant reproached Yuku. In his tender chivalrous heart she held the same place that she had ever held, save that his love for her was deepened by an infinite pity and remorse. So Pierre, on this gloomy morning, put his last lingering hope aside and tried to stare bravely in the face of the solitary existence that would be his until the gods should mercifully relieve him of this burden we call life. But he had reckoned without Nancy Becket.

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X.

THAT same afternoon Barney had a tale of woe to pour out to him, concerning the structure of the very fine stables. It appeared that the habit of graft was practised in Japan even as in America and Barney had discovered much poor lumber to have been shipped to him concealed under about half as much good lumber. "And I won't trust one of them again, sir," he declared, "so I ask your leave to go myself to the outlandish named place and pick out my own wood, if I can be spared, sir." As Barney was of no outward and visible use in the establishment, however indispensable he may have been considered in the inward and spirit-

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ual recesses of his own imagination, Pierre signified that he could readily be spared and expressed his approval of the plan. "And if you please, sir, Nancy would like to go with me."

"Nancy!" exclaimed Pierre. "Of course, if she wants to, but why in the world *does* she want to go?"

"Because," said Nancy, joining miraculously in the conversation, her voice coming ghostily through the wall; "because," repeated Nancy, appearing in the flesh at the door, "I'm not going to let Barney go wandering off by himself to be eaten alive by heathens."

"I see," laughed Pierre. "She takes good care of you, Barney."

"She does that, sir."

"Make the most of her, Barney, and remember that it's better to break all the ten commandments every day

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of your life than once to hurt a woman."

"Yes, sir. We'll be starting, then. I expect we'll be away a night or two, sir, but Chuchu tells us there is an hotel there where they speak English, and Chuchu's son, who is a bit of a carpenter, sir, and a smart boy, and who is working on the stables, is going with us as a sort of guide, sir."

"Very well, Barney; then I shall not expect you back until I see you. I hope you may have good luck with the lumber." A little later they left the house, Nancy once more in the astonishing hat and the green cloak. Barney, more like a bandit chief than ever, in a big slouch hat, and Chuchu's boy, small, slant-eyed, and impassive, bringing up the rear with a suit-case.

They had but turned the corner when Barney was inexplicably over-

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come by a series of chuckles, which threatened to shake him then and there. Nancy, who appeared to understand the joke, only grinned sympathetically, while Chuchu's boy, who had never been known to smile, wrinkled his small eyes twice and walked stolidly behind them. Although the train which they should have taken was one going south, that which they did take went due north. Furthermore, instead of arriving at a flourishing town, they alighted upon the platform of a lonely little station, perched on the top of a hill, the only building in sight save for a very small house that bore the sign of an inn. Toward this inn they made their way, Chuchu's boy now in the lead, and after due altercation between Chuchu's boy and a very old woman with one yellow tooth, Barney and Nancy

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were shown into a small room, where they were presently served with rice and cut-up radishes and where they subsequently spent the night. Early the next morning Chuchu's boy rapped on their door, and the worthy Becket, having breakfasted on more rice and tea, laid a certain sum of money in the wrinkled claw of the yellow-toothed woman and proceeded to mount into swinging rickshaws in charge of the largest Japanese men Nancy had seen, and whom Chuchu's boy appeared to have invoked from somewhere, for there had been no sign last night of the existence of any living creature, save and except the ancient station master and the woman with the yellow tooth.

Some hours later they arrived at the steep path leading up to Elmsley's plantation, and, bidding the rickshaw

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men wait for them there, Nancy and her husband alighted, and, preceded by Chuchu's boy, climbed up the rough ascent to the old gates. Here Barney agreed to wait, and the other two entered the dim, overgrown garden. The boy rapped loudly on the door, bringing old Haru, in a state of great excitement. After exchanging a few words, the old woman disappeared, and Chuchu's boy, signifying to Nancy that she had gone to summon Yuku, retreated to the gates to keep Barney in company. A moment of suspense, and then Yuku appeared. Such a frail, white Yuku, with such big, sad eyes! Holding the door open, she invited Nancy, in French, to enter, but Nancy, understanding her gesture, if not her words, shook her head. Then, without further preliminary, Nancy began, abruptly: "Do you speak English?"

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"I speak but few words; but I can understand."

"Then you will understand without being able to answer. Very well, indeed. I want to ask you a plain question. I'd better tell you, first, that I am Master Pierre's old nurse, and I love him. That's why I'm here. Now, what I want to know is whether you are coming back to marry Master Pierre."

"No," replied Yuku, succinctly.

"Do you know that he is all alone; that he is unhappy, sick—that he may die just from sheer grief because you won't come back?"

"He will not die. I am alone—I shall not die."

"You!" cried Nancy. "You! Do you think it matters for a woman to be alone? Bear it? Of course she can bear it. She's meant to bear it. She's made that way. But do you

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think a man is like a woman? Do you think a man can stand sorrow and loneliness and longing? Do you know what it means for Master Pierre to live in this foreign country, sad and lonely? No friends, no pleasure, always by himself, thinking, I suppose, of you! Do you know what his life has been since you left? Do you know that he spends whole nights in your garden—that he is growing thin—that his eyes are the saddest in all the world? Do you know that he can't sleep? Do you know what that means? Then I'll tell you, though I doubt if you'll understand; it means that he is taking morphine. And if you don't know what *that* means I can pretty quickly explain it to you!" Thus Nancy Becket, hands on her hips, black eyes flashing with honest indignation.

"Morphine!" Yuku had paled.

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For of all girls in the world, saving only her cousins in China, the Japanese girl best understands "what that means."

"H'm!" muttered Nancy, who was watching the girl's face keenly, "so I've moved you at last, have I? Yes, morphine," she continued, aloud, "and you have done it; you little, doll-faced, baby thing! To think that you could wreck the life of a big, strong man! I tell you, it would have been better for him if you had clasped those white hands of yours round his throat and crushed out his life the first day he ever saw you, for you are killing him just as surely, and far more painfully, than if you had."

Yuku flung up her slender hands and burst frantically into speech.

"Pierre was cruelle! He said, 'I love you!' then said, 'I do not love

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you best.' Pierre does not deserve—"

"Deserve, is it?" broke in Nancy. "Don't you know a man deserves all a woman can give him, just because he is a man? Master Pierre needed you; that's enough for *you*! Don't you know that that's what you're put into the world for—to be the happiness and comfort of some one man, and for no other reason under the heavens? Don't you know that a woman's just made to give to a man? Give, and give, and give—body and soul, and her life itself, if it's asked of her? And for reward—isn't the very fact, that of the man's existing at all, reward enough for the woman who loves him? The plain fact that he exists, and enables her to live for him, should make her thank God on her knees every day." Thus Nancy Becket, stopping only for want of breath, and firmly convinced,

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for the moment, that she believed every word she said. Barney, standing well within earshot, just inside the gate, folded his hands together and cast his eyes skywards. "Now, what?" inquired Barney, apostrophizing a large grey cloud which loomed ominously up over the horizon, "now, *what* do you think of that?" The cloud being evidently not prepared to say, Mr. Becket brought his gaze back to earth, and turned his stronger ear again in the direction of the verandah.

"And so," Nancy was saying, "it is for you to decide whether Pierre shall live or die, and if you've got one grain of pity in your heart; if there *is* a heart in that exceedingly small body of yours, you'll come back with me."

"Does Pierre know you came?" inquired Yuku.

"No."

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"If I go back," Yuku said, calmly, taking great pains with her English, "it will be 'cause I love Pierre, not because anee old, angry woman comes. Good-bye!" and Yuku walked into the house, leaving her adversary speechless. "But I think she'll come," Nancy confided to Barney, as they made their way down the broken path. "I think I frightened her, though of all the utterly inanimate little creatures in the world she is the most so." The big, grey cloud threatening to fall to the earth as heavy, grey rain at any moment, the Becketts decided to remain snugly at the old inn until the morning, Chuchu's boy strongly recommending this course, and promising that they should have a good dinner, if he himself had to cook it. Having faith in Chuchu's boy, whose powers appeared supernal, the Becketts remained.

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XI.

THE first of November, and a snow storm in Japan!—a grey sky, a cutting wind, and white flakes whirling this way and that, as if they realized how out of place they were, and were loath to settle down! Trees swaying and groaning in the furious blasts; flowers drooping their heads and crouching low near the earth in vain endeavour to escape the wind, which found them out and whipped them into ribbons; the little people hurrying along on the tiny wooden platforms that do duty in Japan for rubbers, bending their heads to avoid the stinging snowflakes, and silently, passively resenting it all—the cold and the frozen snow and the wind.

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"A bad night," observed Pierre, as he opened his window just before getting into bed. "I hope Nancy and Barney have found comfortable quarters. A bad night to be out in, but a good night for sleeping. I think I'll try it, for a while at any rate, without the morphine. A storm always used to send me off." From which it would appear that the habit had not yet taken any strong hold on him.

Pierre did fall asleep, and his sleep being natural and light, instead of the torpor the drug induced, it happened that when, about midnight, a bird flew in at his window and struck blindly against his bed, falling stunned upon his pillow, he awoke with a start, and, striking a match, which he found after groping on his little bedside table, he caught up the small disturber of the night and uttered a cry of amazement, for it was Yuku's

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white bird. Springing out of bed, Pierre lighted a small, red lamp, and, holding it high, turned towards the window. Then he saw her, standing just inside the low, open window, her long cloak coated with ice; her dark, uncovered hair glistening as the light of the lamp fell on its wet waves, her small, outstretched hands dripping.

"Yuku!" he cried, hoarsely. Before he could reach her, she had thrown herself at his feet.

"Pierre!" she cried, wildly, "I have come to you! I love you! Don't forgive me—I don't ask you—just let me stay here, be your servant—*anything*—just to be with you, for I love you, Pierre, I love you, I love you!" And Pierre, stooping, lifted her, all wet and cold as she was, and held her close against his heart, saying no word, but loving her, soothing her, for the girl was shaking with a passion

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that made him afraid for her. She calmed down after a while, and Pierre, having closed the window to make it warmer, drew off her wet cloak and drenched little sandals. Then, putting on his warm dressing gown, which he had utterly forgotten about until that moment, he wrapped Yuku in a thick blanket, and, taking her in his arms, sat down in the old, deep chair. For a little space neither of them spoke, but sat in deep content, Pierre holding the little, yielding form as if he could never let it go again, and Yuku, her arm curved round his neck, her head on his shoulder, her cheek against his. At length Yuku broke silence.

“ Pierre, you forgive me?”

“ Oh, my child, my little child, do *you* forgive *me*?”

“ I have nothing to *forgive*, Pierre. I love you.”

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Pierre drew her closer.

"And I left you all alone, Pierre."

"You must not think of that now, Yuku. You have come back to me."

"And I will stay, always, always, and I will just live for you; and, Pierre," he bent his head to catch the whispered words, "do you know, I think it has been all for the best. Because the love I give you now is so much stronger and purer and less selfish. It has been tried, my love, in fire, and all the selfishness and weakness of it has been burned away, and now it is fit to offer you." Pierre bent his head lower.

"Yuku! Yuku!" he whispered, brokenly.

"You have suffered, Pierre." Yuku stroked his cheek. "You are ill, so thin and white!"

"Not ill now, Yuku. Not ill now."

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"Do I make you better?" with one of her old smiles.

"Yes, dear."

"And I don't tire you? "I'm not too heavy?"

"Oh, no! no! no!" crushing her.

"Pierre, your eyes are too big. You haven't slept."

"No, dear; I could not sleep."

"You will sleep now that I have come back?"

"I will sleep now, Yuku. Oh, my darling, I will sleep now."

Silence; then Yuku said: "You haven't asked me how I came, Pierre."

"I have not, indeed, my sweet. The blessed fact that you are here has made me quite forget to wonder how you arrived at such an hour. How *did* you come, Yuku, and where are your servants?"

"I came alone."

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"Alone, dear?"

"Yes. Haru wanted me to wait till the messenger came and come with him, if I would not send word for you to come, for we had no servants up there; but I couldn't wait, Pierre. I just could not wait one minute. I left yesterday. I walked."

"Walked all that way?"

"I walked to the station, over the hills, and I meant to come by train, but I had forgotten to bring money. Pierre, you see what a silly child I am, and just by chance I had enough in a little bag to come a little more than half way. I wasn't afraid. The road to Tokyo is quite straight, and I knew the way. When I came to the city it was dark, and I came slowly by the back streets, because I was afraid. But I got here at last, Pierre, and the window was open for me."

"But, sweetheart, that is terrible!

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You will be ill! Out in that dreadful storm!" He shuddered, and drew the blanket more snugly around her.

"I was coming to you, Pierre. I scarcely knew that it was storming."

"My darling!" murmured Pierre, a deep reverence rising newly in his heart for this slight slip of a girl who could love so well.

"Pierre."

"Sweetheart?"

"I am very tired."

"Then sleep, little cherry blossom; sleep here, in my arms."

She put up her red lips to be kissed; then, like a weary child, nestled low in Pierre's arms, and in a few moments her soft, slow breathing told him that she slept. Still he sat there, holding the sleeping girl, watching her in the dim light of the red lamp—the closed eyes, the sleep-flushed cheeks, the tangled hair against his

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arm, the white, half-bared throat, the relaxed little hands—all so helpless, so defenceless, so trusting, so unutterably sweet. After a time, longing to keep her so, but fearing that if he did she would suffer from her curled-up position in the morning, Pierre rose and laid her gently in his own bed. She did not waken, being half dead with fatigue. Then Pierre drew his chair close to the bedside, pulled the blanket he had before wrapped about Yuku over himself, and, laying his head on the pillow where hers was lying, fell swiftly and soundly asleep. Fell asleep so, and wakened to find his head on Yuku's breast, cradled in her arms.

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XII.

WHEN Mr. and Mrs. Becket and Ohuchu's boy arrived home at noon the next day, Pierre took Nancy in his arms and kissed her, and shook Barney by the hand until Nancy entertained lively fears as to its probable dislocation. For Yuku, who had forgotten it at first, in the stress of other matters, had told him this morning of Nancy's visit, and had admitted that she had been the cause of her coming so soon. "Though I would have come at last, Pierre," she assured him, "the angry old woman just brought me to my senses sooner than I could have brought myself."

"So she's come, has she?" said Nancy, briskly, whisking away

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Pierre's gratitude, as she whisked away a tear.

"She came last night, Nancy. We are going to stay here to-night, and I think that by to-morrow we might get into the Water Lily House.

"Are you married yet?" demanded Nancy.

Pierre threw up his hands in a way he had.

"Great heavens! Of course we're not. I declare, I never thought of it!"

"Then, I think you'd better see to it before evening," observed Nancy, drily.

So Yuku and Pierre were married that afternoon in the American missionary's sunny room, Nancy and Barney and the missionary's sweet-faced wife duly witnessing the ceremony, and the missionary's wife kissed Yuku, though Nancy did not, for she had not yet forgiven the girl.

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That evening, Pierre came upon his little bride sitting, in a brown study, on the foot of the bed, and, raising her face to his, he saw the old familiar look of question in her eyes. "What is it, little one?" he asked, amused.

"Pierre!" there was an awed tone in Yuku's voice. "Pierre, do you sleep in this big, soft thing every night?"

"And shall I sleep in one just as soft as this?"

"Indeed you shall, sweetheart, unless you prefer your old, accustomed bed."

"Oh, no!" cried Yuku. "I love this. It's wonderful! Now, at last, I understand what often puzzles our people—why Americans and English people remain so late in bed. Some time, Pierre, I am going to stay in it for a whole week, and just feel it, and feel it, and feel it!"

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The very next day, the whole household removed to the House of the Water Lilies, where old Senten received them with open arms. In the intervals of working upon the stables, Chuchu's boy, under Barney's direction, had cut a fireplace in one of the rooms, the room which was to be Pierre's library and own familiar den. Many things had come from across the sea to make the Japanese house more comfortable. Beautiful rugs and curtains, tables and bookcases, and big, soft beds, and deep, hollow chairs, and an absurdly small rocking chair for Yuku, and ever so many other things, that Pierre had sent for. Arriving, as they did, on the steamer which docked on the day that had been set for the wedding, they were all to have been arranged under Elmsley's supervision during the honeymoon. But, though there had

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been neither Elmsley nor a wedding-trip, Pierre had had everything brought to the house, and had seen to its disposition himself. And, now, Yuku ran from room to room, making fresh discoveries everywhere, and calling on Pierre to explain to her the uses of these wonderful new things, and going into little raptures every five minutes over the absurdly small rocking chair, rocking herself, indeed, so enthusiastically that Pierre interfered only in time to save her from going over backwards and breaking her blessed little neck.

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XIII.

THE days passed all too quickly. Pierre's malaria soon succumbed to the now settled cold weather and the fresh, pure air that blew around the House of the Water Lilies—while the hypodermic needle disappeared forever, where, Pierre never knew, though Nancy Becket might have enlightened him. Only once had Yuku ever referred to the cause of her going away. "Pierre," she said, one evening, when she was sitting in her favorite place at his feet; "Pierre, I want to speak to you just once."

"What is it, dear?" raising her grave little face to his, and putting back her shadowy hair.

"It's about the other woman,

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Pierre. I am not going to ask whether I am first in your heart or not; I love you with all my soul; my whole life is yours—would be, even if you did not love me at all."

"Yuku," Pierre said gently, "you know that I love you."

"How could I doubt it, Pierre?"

"You believe that I will always love you; always be your true and faithful husband, and that, no matter what happens, I will never change to you?"

"As I believe in my own soul, Pierre."

"Will you believe, and try to understand this, too, Yuku? That, although the love I gave her may have been—what shall I say?—more intense, more overwhelming, the love that I gave you is infinitely more protecting, more cherishing?"

"I do believe it, Pierre." Her

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eyes were like stars now; she knelt at his feet, hands clasped on his knees.

"Believe, too, dear, that I very seldom think of her now; that, with you here beside me, I am perfectly content, and that any memory that still may be deep down in my heart steals nothing from my love for you."

"I know it well, Pierre."

"Then let us never mention it again, Yuku."

"Never again, Pierre."

"You are happy, sweetheart?"

"So happy, my husband, that I think, sometimes, my heart will break with joy."

So the subject dropped between them, and, although Yuku always believed that far down in his heart the "other girl" was first, she was not unhappy, for Pierre did love her, and she was giving him happiness, and soon the faint shadow faded from

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Yuku's thoughts, and the remembrance of the other girl grew dim, and almost ceased to exist. This because Yuku was so young, perhaps.

Nancy still retained her position as housekeeper. For Pierre, whose office hours were of the shortest, never wanted Yuku out of his sight when he was at home, and Yuku used laughingly to declare that if it had not been for this most competent of managers her housekeeping must have gone to rack and ruin. Nancy never wholly forgave Yuku, but, little by little, in spite of herself, she softened towards the little wife of Pierre, and grew far fonder of her than she ever would have admitted.

Barney, on the other hand, was Yuku's devoted slave. The very fine stables were finished shortly after Pierre's marriage—it was remarkable to note that no more mistakes

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were made in regard to the shipments of lumber—but Barney, having corresponded with a personal friend, who was groom in a large breeding stable, found that he need not go to America after all. Instead, relying on the good faith of his friend (which Pierre privately thought was a very risky thing to do, having had some experience of the peculiar habits of those who sell horses), sent orders that three saddle horses and two carriage horses, a victoria, a dog-cart, and a small phaeton should be shipped on the first steamer Eastward bound.

“For Miss Yuku” (so he always called her) “will want the little phaeton to drive herself, and a victoria is always necessary, and no gentleman can do without his dog-cart.” Thus Barney, defending his order, at which Pierre had expressed faint surprise. “It’s a good thing

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ichi san gives me such a ridiculously high salary, and that Aunt Caroline left me decidedly independent," laughed Pierre, "or you would have Yuku and myself in the poor-house, Barney, my man. However, go ahead; I'll call a halt if you go too far," at which Barney touched his hat and walked off to the stables, where Chuchu's boy, who had sworn life-long fidelity to the Becketts, was learning to be a groom.

And it scarcely seemed a day till the horses arrived, proving Barney's faith in his friend to be well founded, and Pierre's suspicions entirely at fault, and now, so her husband said, Yuku must learn to ride. How she trembled, and clung fast to Pierre, when he put her upon the quiet mare that was to be her own! How she held her breath when the horse, led by Barney, walked slowly around the

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yard, and how *very* glad she was when Pierre, saying she must not be tired at her first lesson, lifted her down! The second time it was not quite so terrifying, and Yuku soon gained confidence—not in herself, nor in her horse—but simply because Pierre put her there. She could not believe that the pretty mare enjoyed being ridden, was amenable to the slightest touch on the rein, and was possessed of as sweet a temper as Yuku's own. She did not understand how she could have any power of control over a creature so many times bigger and stronger than herself, but she did believe that Pierre would never have placed her in the saddle if there had been the slightest danger in so placing her, and in her absolute trust of her husband she soon lost her fear, and began to enjoy her riding lessons very much. After some days, for Pierre

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was very careful and would not risk Yuku's being frightened, they ventured out into the quiet road, Pierre guiding her horse by a leading rein, to which humiliation the little mare secretly objected, but was too sweet-tempered to make her objections manifest. A day or so and the leading rein was abolished, a cautious canter was indulged in, Pierre's horse broke into a gallop, the mare followed, and when Yuku came up beside him, cheeks flushed, eyes sparkling with excitement, Pierre knew that the game was won, and that Yuku's riding was an accomplished fact.

Day after day, in the crisp, spring air, they rode together, and it really seemed as though Barney must burst with pride, as he watched his mistress cantering down the drive, in her pretty habit, so bright, so graceful, so

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fearless, and so tiny. So the days passed, and the sun grew warmer, and at length, to their great pleasure, Elmsley returned. The first evening of his return, after Yuku had gone to bed, Pierre told his godfather all that had happened, not sparing himself, and speaking of Yuku in a way to make Elmsley's eyes glow, as he said to himself: "Her mother, over again. Her sainted, adorable mother, living again." At the end of Pierre's tale, he observed, reflectively: "So, it would appear, my dear Pierre, that the Southern—that is to say, the Woman—in Yuku's nature, transcended the Japanese, as proved by her returning to you—alive. For, let me tell you, you ran a terrible risk of losing her by her own hand, and when these Japanese women strike once they never have to strike a second time. However, all's well; eh,

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Pierre?" and Elmsley dismissed the subject, to Pierre's infinite relief, for he had not at all relished the thought of imparting the story to Yuku's guardian.

Elmsley at once established himself in the House of the Open Window, with two other sons of Chuchu (whose family appeared unlimited) to wait upon him, and Nancy, as she insisted upon doing, to oversee his household once a week. For Nancy Becket, even as one Thomas of the same surname, loved to be a "power behind," and, failing thrones, substituted households.

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XIV.

THE days slipped swiftly by, and before anyone could have realized it, it was April, and Yuku began to watch for buds on the cherry trees. Then, one morning, Yuku found a spray of pink blossoms beside her plate, which Chuchu's boy had gathered for her. Yuku, her cheeks as pink as the flowers, broke off a twig for Pierre's button-hole, twining the rest in her dark hair, to the great, though unexpressed, gratification of the ever stolid son of Chuchu. What a spring that was! Mother Nature, as if to make up for a very unpleasant fall, seemed determined to give them a beautiful spring, and quite outdid herself in the at-

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tempt. The skies were of the faintest shades of blue in the daytime and faintly pink in the evening. The moon and the stars were never obtrusively bright, the very sun seemed delicately veiled. The trees, new budding, were mistily green, and the rain (for it *did* rain, sometimes, even in the Enchanted Island) came softly down in a silver shower. There was a mystery, an elusive delicacy in this Japanese spring, and Pierre saw, now, where the Japanese painters had caught their trick of tinting, appreciating it as he never had before. And the cherry trees! Never before, so the old men told him, had there been such a year for cherry blossoms. It seemed as if the slender branches must break beneath the weight of blooms. The whole atmosphere was tinged with pink. In the public gardens, those famed for their cherry

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trees, the display was marvellous, but one did not need to go to the gardens this year. Every man who could boast of one tree in his garden this spring boasted a beautiful sight. Pierre never tired of riding countrywards, and, drawing rein at the top of a hill, some two miles from the house, gazing down over the city, drinking in the dainty beauty of it.

The city, nestling below him—quaint-shaped roofs set in a wilderness of misty green leaves and trembling pink blossoms, temples standing high and alone amid the tall, dark pines, with their hint of mystery and strange gods; then, beyond, the harbor, with its myriad ships, from Chinese junks to great steam liners, a confusion of bright funnels and high masts, and a tracery of rigging against the sky—the sea grey-blue, and above a white-flecked sky—this,

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seen through the silvery May haze that softened both lights and shadows, made Pierre think, musingly, that the art impressionism should be studied only in Japan and in the spring. For, just as the people themselves, though they are the most courteous in the world, impress one always as having their cloaks of reserve drawn about them, so the landscape in spring, in its misty greens and pinks and pale grey blues, seems to be under a filmy veil. This effect, indeed, is peculiar only to April and May, for in the hot days of summer the haze disappears and the views are harsher. But if the summer days are days of realism, they are made up for by the summer nights. Those deep, flower-haunted nights, when the lanterns swing among the trees and the fireflies dart from the bushes and the air faints in the warm sweetness—when the very

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moonlight is softly, deeply tinged with gold, and sheds a radiance that seems to warm the earth! One forgets to sigh for the mystic days of spring in the sensuous nights of summer. And Yuku and Pierre drained the nights of their beauty as this summer wore away, and this second summer was many times more gloriously sweet than the year before had been, although they had not dreamed it possible.

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XV.

BUT, as the months went by and September passed and October arrived, with no cessation of the unusually hot weather, Yuku grew pale, and found it too great an exertion to ride, and did not go with Pierre to sail in the quaint-sailed ship, and presently found it a long way to the garden. So Pierre used to carry her out beside the pool where the lilies floated, and sometimes he laid her on the vine-twined bench which Nancy kept covered with soft cushions, but often-er he held her in his arms, resting her as only a man's strong arms *can* rest a woman, smiling with suddenly-dimmed eyes when she protested that she would tire him.

At length there came a time when

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Yuku was not carried into the garden, but lay in her big bed, and then, soon after, one terrible day, when Pierre sat, with clenched hands, staring ahead with eyes that did not see, while Yuku lay in the inner room, fighting for two lives.

When Pierre next saw Yuku, she still lay in the big bed, very white and frail, and very, very tired, but with a "light that never was on sea or land" shining in her dark eyes, and lying in the close curve of her arm—Yuku in miniature.

"She has your blue eyes, Pierre." Oh, the new note in Yuku's voice, the wonderful note of motherhood. Pierre knelt by the bed and put the hand she held out to him against his lips, bowing his head upon it.

"You are glad, Pierre?"

"My darling!" was all that he could say.

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"Kiss your daughter, monsieur," with the ghost of her old smile.

Pierre brushed with his lips the wee hand lying in Yuku's.

"Can you love your baby yet, Pierre?" anxiously.

"My sweet—I am so thankful that you are safe that I cannot think of anything else, just now. Oh, my little wife," and Pierre's head went down again.

"Poor boy!" whispered Yuku, laying her little hand on his hair, "you have suffered more than I have. I just kept saying to myself that it was for you, all for your sake, and so I did not mind the pain at all, my husband." Then, in a low tone: "Pierre, call me my new name," and Pierre, divining her wish, called her "Mother! Little mother! beloved little mother! Oh, my darling, my darling; my child's little mother,"

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and at that moment Nancy entered the room and sent Pierre out like a very tyrant. And now Pierre found that he was of very little consequence in his own home, and contracted a habit of walking on tiptoe, and tried to be so elaborately quiet that he overdid it, and was, in consequence, more noisy than he had ever been in his life before, to the exasperation of Mrs. Becket, who, at present, reigned supreme. But what Pierre did *not* find out was that, when he saw his child in its mother's arms that first day, the old love in his heart died, utterly. Pierre did not realize this, and, what is far more important, Yuku did not realize it, either. It is doubtful, however, whether Pierre would have told Yuku even if he *had* found it out, for he believed that she had quite forgotten about it all, and

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would not have reminded her. He never dreamed that she still believed him to be true to the other woman; that she believed herself to be second in his love; to tell the truth, he very seldom thought of that matter at all, one way or another, and Yuku herself thought of it less and less.

Pierre bore Nancy's dominion meekly, and, at last, was rewarded by being informed, one Sunday morning, that if there were a fire in the library, he might carry Yuku in there and put her upon the sofa in front of said fire. Which Pierre did, compromising, however, on a big chair, where he seated himself, holding Yuku in his arms. After this, Yuku quickly grew strong, and Pierre took her driving (her first experience) in the old-fashioned "comfy" phaeton, and, after a while, the baby, whom

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they had named "Koki," after Yuku's mother, for Pierre said there could only be one "Yuku" in all the world, was taken driving, too, and behaved in a truly remarkable manner, never crying once, and exhibiting the most profound interest in the horses. At least Yuku said it did, and, as its mother, she surely ought to know.

I don't suppose that quite such a marvellous baby ever appeared upon this planet. There may be more wonderful specimens in Mars or Venus, or some world which we know nothing about, and, in all probability, never shall know, but certainly upon this earth there could be no two such babies. As its mother pointed out, the length of its eyelashes alone was enough to stamp it as the superior of all other children, past, present or

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future, not to mention its extraordinary quantity of hair and the astonishing strength in its tiny fingers. And it was so good! As Yuku said, it "ought to cry a certain amount or else its lungs would never be strong," but, apart from this necessary exercise, one might almost say it never cried. But, of all the amazing circumstances connected with this small, new creation, the most amazing was the abject devotion it inspired in the breast of Nancy. Nothing was a trouble that was for the baby. Her proudest moments were when she took it out in its gin-rickshaw; her happiest moments when she had it alone, and taught it to play with, and, as she fondly hoped, to love, her. Nancy's step was lighter, and Nancy's voice was lower, and Nancy's eyes were softer since the

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baby had come, and all the affection she did not—could not—would not—give to the mother, she lavished on the child. And Yuku, Yuku, the sweet, let her have her way, and loved her dearly for the love she gave the child.

To see Yuku with her baby was a sight Pierre never tired of. Yuku, so like a child herself, yet with that heavenly mother-light in her eyes and the thrilling mother-tone in her voice, holding in her slender, white arms the blue-eyed child, with its roseleaf cheeks and its rosebud mouth. At first Pierre had felt almost jealous of the baby, feeling that it had stolen Yuku from him, but he quickly found that Yuku's love for her child grew simply out of her love for him—it was his child, and, therefore, to be loved—and that her love for him was just the same in its intensity, and that in her

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heart he was, and ever would be, absolutely and passionately first. So, Pierre, the first, inevitable jealous twinges past, soon grew to enjoy his baby, and to be really interested in her development, and then to love her. To this day Pierre remembers the thrill in his heart when she took her first step. How Yuku clung to him as Nancy stood the little thing on the floor, and then coaxed her from the other side of the room with a bit of sugar candy. How all their hearts stood still as she put out one foot, wavered, stepped, tottered, and then actually ran across, to be caught in Nancy's arms and tossed, screaming with delight, high into the air. How delighted they were, coming in together to the nursery, one afternoon, to find Elmsley, down on all fours, playing bear with Koki—and how horri-

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fied Elmsley was to be found! How happy they all were, Yuku and Pierre and Elmsley and the Baby, and Barney, Nancy, and Chuchu's boy, who considered himself in some mysterious way to have been appointed by heaven to be the special protection of the baby, and who employed all his spare time in fashioning little pagodas for her out of stiff paper, and carving hideous, wooden dolls, which, with the vagary of her sex, she infinitely preferred to the really beautiful dolls her father brought her. This to the high delight of Chuchu's boy, who gave vent to his enjoyment occasionally by a startling and utterly expressionless laugh.

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XVI.

Now, it happened that about this time, it being in the late winter time, one year after Koki's birth, a malignant disease broke out among the poor people down in the heart of Tokyo. The health officers, who are a splendid organization in Japan, soon succeeded in stamping it out, and all ships outward bound were diligently watched that no disease-infected person should come aboard. One man, however, did board a steamer bound for America, with the disease half developed within him. Although he discovered his illness before the ship made port at New York, he managed, craftily, to elude the quarantine inspectors, and, arriv-

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ing unsuspected among his friends in the foreign settlement, speedily succumbed to his sickness, but not before he had imparted it to several people around. In a day the plague had spread over half of that district, and the wind, blowing across the tainted space and up into the fairest parts of the stately old city, carried the horrible infection with it. And the first to be stricken by the breath of that death wind, was the man from the West who had played the game of love against Pierre, trumping his heart with a diamond, and carrying off the prize.

As often happens, the big, strong man could make no resistance against the illness, and, as also often happens, although, while living, his income had seemed unlimited, when he died, it was discovered that he left his widow penniless. That widow, a few days

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after her husband's death, sat in her boudoir with her mother. There had evidently been a stormy discussion going on, for the daughter, looking broken and despondent, stared gloomily into the fire, while her mother sat, with tightly-folded hands, and an expression of intense satisfaction that could only come from having carried her point.

"So I have quite convinced you, Evelyn, that you are utterly unfitted to earn your own living in any capacity whatsoever, have I?"

"You have quite convinced me, mother."

"And you feel assured that your only course is to marry again?" The daughter raised her face. A different face, indeed—the pretty, perplexed, tear-stained face that had told Pierre good-bye. A handsomer face, but strangely hardened since that

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day. A scornful face, surely, with those proud lips and that bitter look in her eyes.

"I see that there is nothing to be done, but to invest me in the matrimonial market," she said. "I hope the second venture may turn out better than the first."

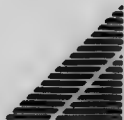
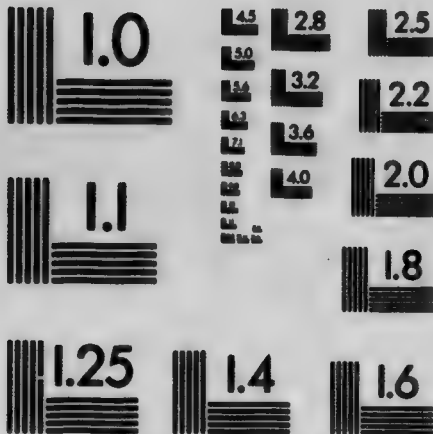
"Evelyn!" cried her mother, "I must beg of you not to speak in such a coarse manner. Where you have acquired it, I cannot imagine."

"Well, well, mother; it surely matters little in what manner I speak. To continue our discussion, you have proved to me that I must marry again; but you have admitted that we must live in the meantime, and I can assure you that, if we are more fortunate than I dare to hope, we shall only realize out of the sale money enough to keep us for one year. And, as you know, mamma, we have got to



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follow observances, and keep in seclusion for one year, at least. And one is not likely to find a rich husband when one is furtively haunting cheap German watering-places and wearing out all one's old, black clothes, as we must do."

"Evelyn, Evelyn, do cease chattering and let me think. Is there no one from whom you can borrow money for two years?"

"If there were such a person, which there is not, do you think that I would borrow money of him, to be paid back in event of marrying a rich man? I am afraid the shock of James' death, or the greater shock of his leaving nothing behind him, has bereft you of your wits, my dear mother." But her contempt weighed nothing with her mother.

"I am sure," she continued, as if the girl had not spoken, "that if we

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could come back and take a handsome apartment for the winter, that it would inevitably happen that you should marry again. You are a thousand times handsomer and more charming than you were three years ago."

"Oh, as to that," Evelyn interrupted, impatiently; "if I put myself up at auction, I am not afraid of being passed by. And, I assure you, mother, for your comfort, that I shall go to the highest bidder."

Her mother bit her lips, as if to restrain an angry answer, and her daughter, with an amused smile, added: "But it's all moonshine, mother. We can't come back, and take an apartment, and promise to pay the rent when I have found a rich husband. I am afraid no landlord would accept such security."

"Evelyn, surely there is some busi-

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ness friend of James who can lend us the money! And why is it necessary to explain just how we intend to repay it?"

"My dear mamma, James' friends are very hard-headed business men, and I am afraid they would *require* us to explain how we were to repay them, and they have a troublesome habit of requesting securities, these people who lend money, which we should be quite unable to give."

"If we only had some dear, rich friend"——

"But we haven't, mamma."

"I heard the other day that Pierre was making a great deal of money out in Japan, in addition to what his old aunt left him, which must have been a small fortune," Evelyn's mother observed, tentatively.

"*Pierre!*" The mother should have shrivelled up like dry parched

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under the fire that flashed from her daughter's eyes, as Evelyn sprang to her feet.

"Yes, Pierre;" her mother's voice was unmoved, though she watched her daughter with steely eyes.

"Mother, have you *no* self-respect? Do you think I have none? Little enough, heaven knows; but I will not stoop to that! Borrow money from Pierre—Pierre, of all men on earth!" She walked quickly to the window and leaned her crimson cheek against the cool pane.

"And why not Pierre?" inquired her mother. "Pierre would be only too glad to lend it to you and *he* would not ask you how you intended to pay it back. It would give him pleasure, Evelyn, for he is one of those ridiculously romantic boys who never recover from an attachment. I have no doubt he thinks he loves you yet, my

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dear, and would do anything in the world for you."

"And if he *does*, mother, how much the greater reason for not asking him?"

"My *dear* Evelyn, you are not developing sentimental symptoms?"

"No, mother," her daughter answered quickly, "it is rather too late in my life for that. If they had developed some years ago it might have been better for us all. But don't you see, mamma, that under the circumstances, Pierre is the last person on earth to appeal to? It simply wouldn't do, mother. Surely the reason doesn't need to be explained to anyone who has a shred of decent feeling left."

"Really, Evelyn, you seem almost hysterical. I assure you such vehemence is quite unnecessary. I appreciate your point, of course, but it does

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not apply to the present case, because Pierre is married."

"Married!" echoed her daughter.

"Yes, Mrs. Ainslee, who was a friend of that extraordinary young Elmsley, who went to Japan years ago, happened to meet him in London last month, the first time, I believe, that he has ever left Tokyo in twenty years. Of course she inquired about Pierre and it appears that he is married to some little Japanese girl or other, and has become quite a domesticated Japanese himself."

"Pierre is married!" Evelyn repeated.

"I hope the intelligence does not affect you unpleasantly."

"I am very glad," said Evelyn, quietly, and for a moment the fire in her eyes was quenched.

"So you see," resumed her mother, "there would be no impropriety now

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in applying to Pierre as an old friend for a small loan. You agree with me, dear? For you must appreciate the terrible importance of our having money, Evelyn."

"It certainly alters the case, and as you say, we must live." Evelyn spoke thoughtfully. "It is entirely different, asking a favor of Pierre (whom I wronged, most cruelly), believing him still to be as bitterly hurt and as deeply in love with me as ever, and asking it of him now, when I find that he is married, presumably happy, and has no doubt long ago forgiven if not forgotten me."

"Of course it is different," agreed her mother, briskly; "Pierre is the person of persons to apply to. Apart from his being an old friend, as I suggested before, he no doubt has a certain foolish regard for you still and will be only too happy to serve you."

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"I sincerely trust, mamma, that he has no such regard. If I believed it, I most certainly would not write him, but I know Pierre, and I am sure that he would never have married if he had retained any lingering tenderness for me."

"And so you feel that you can write to him without incurring the risk of wounding his sensitive feelings?" the mother sneered.

"I feel," returned her daughter, steadily, "that no letter of mine can hurt Pierre now."

"And you will write?"

"I—think so."

"Very well. You have made a mountain out of a molehill, as usual, Evelyn, but it is worth while, even so long an argument, to see you in your right senses about this matter. It will not be necessary to enter into any explanations, I think. If I read

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Pierre's absurdly chivalrous nature aright, the mere fact that you ask for the money *as a loan* will be guarantee sufficient of its being repaid."

Her daughter rose hastily. "I can assure you, mother," she said, her eyes scornful, her tone harsh, "that if I write to Pierre at all, I shall tell him exactly how I expect to pay his money back to him, and he can please himself and do as he thinks best. Better for me, perhaps, if he refused." Her eyes darkened as she spoke.

"My dear Evelyn," expostulated her mother, but with a quick, hard laugh her daughter swept out of the room, and there was the sound a moment later of a key turning, which proclaimed that there was to be no more discussion that morning.

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XVII.

ALTHOUGH the plague in Tokyo, owing to the promptness and resource of the health officers, had been soon stamped out, nevertheless there were some few people among the upper classes who did not escape it. Pierre, who had never been quite as strong since, as he had been before that first touch of malaria, was necessarily susceptible, and the winds that blew in from the harbor across the city brought the disease to the House of the Water Lilies. Yuku and her baby were sent up at once to old Haru. Senten, who understood the nature of the illness, proved herself invaluable as a nurse (incidentally almost coming to blows with Nancy, who couldn't

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and wouldn't be sent away, and who strongly resented Senten's superior knowledge in this particular), and the attack being a slight one, Pierre was out of bed and on his couch almost before he knew he had been ill. The sickness, however, left him weak and languid, a touch of malaria set in, and Yuku returned to find her young husband still an invalid and likely to remain one for some weeks.

The weather, which had been unsettled and rainy—this in part accounting for Pierre's poor health—suddenly turned warm and sunny, and Barney, at Yuku's request, each day carried Pierre out to the garden, Chuchu's boy going ahead, dragging the big chair (the identical chair in which Pierre had held Yuku on the night of her return—for Pierre would sit in no other), and Yuku and Nancy following with so many cushions that if

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Pierre had put them all in his chair there would have been no room for himself. Then Chuchu's boy would bring out the absurdly small rocking chair for Yuku and a rug for the baby, and here they would sit by the pool where the lilies floated (or would float when the time came), and here Elmsley joined them in the afternoons and here, also, came a certain old Buddhist priest, a gentle ascetic old man, a friend of Elmsley's, to whom Pierre had taken a wondrous liking and who had been kind to Pierre during his illness and had grown fond of him, as one always grew fond of Pierre. Many were the long talks they had, Elmsley, Pierre and the old priest, while Yuku sat silently by, sometimes sewing, oftener holding Pierre's hand in hers, for he rested more contentedly so. Talks upon strange subjects, when Pierre gained

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insight into the Japanese mind and was shown the Japanese point of view as few foreigners see it. The transmigration of passion, the basis of the metaphysics of Buddhism, and the reincarnation of souls, were the topics most discussed, and the old priest, waxing eloquent, held them spell-bound many a time.

"A wonderful belief," Pierre said once, "do you really feel that passion in us is only the voice of our ancestors crying to be heard, and that our souls live and live again here on earth?"

"Why, as to that," the old man said, slowly, "I hold opinions different from many of my fellows. I do not proclaim it aloud, for it is not orthodox and would be ill received, but I believe that we are raised to other and more beautiful planets when we have found the beloved one."

Yuku pressed Pierre's hand against

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her cheek, with a look in her eyes which told that if the old man's theory was correct, her next life would not be lived on this earth. The old priest, who saw her expression while appearing to see nothing but the distant blue hills, went on quietly: "Perhaps I should say when the two loved ones have found each other." Yuku's eyes were hidden now by her lashes. She gently withdrew her hand from Pierre's, and stooping, lifted little Koki to her lap. "As you know," the priest continued, "it is our belief that for every soul created there is created a second soul, a mate. The one is incarnated in the body of a man, the other in the body of a woman. They are created for each other, but they must find each other out for themselves. Sometimes in their first incarnation they find each other, then it is my belief that their next incarna-

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tion is on a higher plane than this. But sometimes their eyes are blind, sometimes the eyes of both, oftener it is only one of the two who is in error, and they die and live again and again until at last they look into each other's eyes and recognize and understand. It may take many lives that they have to live, but in the end they shall surely come together."

"You believe that this life is the first incarnation?" asked Pierre, "or rather, that this earth is the first plane?"

"I do. We cannot tell, of course, but many things point to its being so; a few who give themselves to the study of such matters doubt it."

"It is strange," mused Pierre, "to think of living, and marrying perhaps, and dying and having not found the beloved one" (the expression had caught his fancy), "and living again

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and again until one does. Poor other soul, I wonder if she breaks her heart each time?" with a whimsical smile. "It is a belief that accords well with the people, though, is it not, Elmsley? Their tireless patience and perseverance and eternal quiet content is well expressed in that theory of ceaseless incarnation until the two souls meet and so fulfil their destiny."

The priest smiled. "A theory that scarcely suits your impatient American temperament, I am afraid."

"I don't know." There was a note of perplexity in Pierre's voice, a look of trouble in his eyes. "I think it would be rather comforting to believe that some time you would surely find your soul's mate, would some time surely know."

The baby cried suddenly, and Yuku rising carried it away to Nancy. She did not return until the priest and

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Elmsley were leaving, and the old man looked keenly at her pale cheeks, then looked at Pierre for a moment with bent brows. She caught his glance as it rested on her husband and seemed to resent it. She bent swiftly over Pierre, laying her hand on his in a way that made the old priest think involuntarily of a tigress he had once seen, who, wounded and at bay, had thrown herself defiantly in front of her cub. There was the same passionate, savage protection in Yuku's attitude that there had been in the mother tiger's.

"She has found the beloved one," the old priest murmured to himself as he toiled up the steep ascent to the temple. "She read what was in my mind and would shield him even from an unkind thought. She has found her beloved, indeed."

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XVIII.

PARTLY to improve her own English, partly because reading brought on his bad headaches, Yuku at this time constituted herself Pierre's secretary and insisted on reading the American papers to him and the letters that came from abroad, business letters, nearly all, for Pierre had few correspondents.

What a business-like little Yuku, on the day that the mails came, bringing a small table and a very straight chair out beside Pierre, heroically turning her back upon the absurdly small rocking chair that held its arms wide insinuatingly, and sorting out letters in such an orderly way and making such a business of opening the envelopes neatly and reading the contents

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with such an important frown and such a bewitching accent and making such delicious mistakes, and never understanding a word of what she read, but pretending that she knew all about it. And all the time she would look so pretty, the breeze blowing her hair in such distracting waves and getting it into her eyes, and her cheeks would grow so pink and her dear mouth pout so cunningly over the hard words—well, it's my private belief that Pierre knew very little of what was printed in those papers, and only let her read them that he might have the pleasure of watching her. Pierre's favorite time, however, was in the evening when the fire was lighted in the library and he lay on the couch before it. Then Yuku came in beside him in her low chair, hushing her child to sleep, rocking and crooning to it those old lullabies that Pierre

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loved. He used to watch there in the gathering twilight, the firelight flickering on her quaint dress and on her hair and in her thoughtful eyes, the drowsy baby nestling against her, lashes slowly lowering over sleepy, blue eyes, chubby hands gradually relaxing their hold on the precious wooden doll. Pierre never loved her more than at these times as she sat there, her child in her arms, the quiet expression in her face, the mother tone in her voice. When the baby was really asleep, Yuku would rise—oh, such a slender, childlike mother she seemed, until one looked into her eyes and read the woman there—and would carry the child to Nancy, who waited jealously for it. Then she would come back to Pierre, slipping down on the floor by the couch, her arms around him, her head on the cushions beside his.

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" I love you, Pierre."

" My own darling."

Nothing more, perhaps, and so they remained while the fire flickered and fell and glowed and flickered again and turned to ashes, and the moon looked in at the unshuttered windows, and all the stars.

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XIX.

THERE was a change in Yuku, though not so much a change as an intensifying almost, almost beyond the bounds of perfect sanity, of the controlling passion of Yuku's life—her love for Pierre. No one at the Lily Pool house realized it, herself least of all. Had her life continued in unbroken peace as it had been since her marriage, Yuku might have become an old woman and still no one might ever have been the wiser, for the change was so slight, so subtle, that only a scientist given to such study could have recognized it. It is too harsh—it is, indeed, untrue—to say that on this point Yuku was not, for such an expression instantly conjures up in one's mind the horrors of dementia, and Yuku was many,

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many steps from that. But the human mind is a delicate organism, composed of many easily injured cells, and a great strain or a shock or an illness hurts these cells, hurts them all perhaps, or just one or two as the case may be. These little compartments might be numbered or named, for a different sense, or emotion or talent is contained in each and they are not of uniform strength. In Yuku's brain that cell that might have been marked "Pierre," was the strongest cell of all. Since that stormy night, when she had crept in at the open window and had fallen at Pierre's feet in a very ecstasy of self-surrender, the little cell had been growing stronger and stronger. When Yuku gave, she gave to the uttermost. Nancy's words, "Give and give, body and soul and life itself if it's wanted," had burned themselves into Yuku's remembrance;

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she dwelt on them and lived them. It seemed to her that her whole existence were in Pierre, and for Pierre; the wish to live *just for him* became a passion stronger than herself. It controlled her lightest act and was the basis of all her thoughts. She had spoken truly when she had said to Pierre that the selfishness of her love was gone. Her one aim in existing was to make Pierre happy; had she believed that her ceasing to exist would please him more, she would have died by her own act, with no thought save of him.

When Yuku's baby was born, Yuku had almost lost her life, and when the little feet went down into the dark valley, almost to the point from where there is no returning, the one thought that she had carried with her had been that it was for Pierre's sake. Through her illness and delirium that one idea

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had stood out clearly before her, never, even when all other consciousness had left, did she lose Pierre's image in her mind or the thought that all her suffering was for him. And when Yuku recovered, the cell marked " Pierre " had grown larger, larger than was quite normal, and as unfortunately no one cell can become abnormally large save to the detriment of the rest, it so happened that Yuku's love for her husband destroyed a little of her reason and a little of her penetration. and a little of her common sense. Just a very little, indeed, so little that outwardly there was no change in her, nor would there ever have been, if the crafty man from Tokyo had not taken the plague to America and so forged the first link in the chain of events, the completing link of which was to be of Yuku's forming.

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XX.

It was a sunny morning in May and the cherry trees were in full bloom. Under the bright pink canopy Yuku and Pierre sat together, Yuku with a table before her and a pile of letters and papers upon it, for Chuchu's boy had just brought up the mail. Pierre was no longer an invalid, but Yuku took such a wonderful pride in playing secretary and really had improved so marvellously in her English, that Pierre still had his mail brought to the house and he and Yuku went over it together, greatly to the enjoyment of both, and, be it confessed, somewhat to the detriment of any business which the letters contained.

“ Here is a letter, Pierre, that is

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quite thick and written in a lady's hand."

"Really?" Pierre was more interested in Yuku's pink fingers than in the envelope which they held. "Open it, sweetheart, and we'll see who it can be from." Yuku tore open the thick envelope and unfolded the heavy white paper, then she read:

"I am writing to you, Pierre, to ask you to lend me money. When you read that you may wonder what has become of my self-respect. When I tell you that my husband has died leaving me penniless and that I ask this money of you simply that I may use it to render myself as attractive as possible—that I hope to make a rich marriage within a year or so, and that my only means of repaying you will be from my husband's money, you will realize that I have none. My self-respect left me forever, I believe, on

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the day of my marriage, as did my purity, innocence and faith. If I could have kept one of these qualities I should not be writing to you now, but they were shattered then with my ideals and my belief in good."

Yuku ceased reading and raised her eyes with a frightened expression to meet Pierre's.

"It is not for me to read, Pierre," she faltered.

"Give it to me, dear." Yuku handed it to him, a heavy sense of dread falling upon her. Pierre read the rest of the letter.

"You see the depth to which I have fallen when I apply to you—to you—for money. If you send it to me, you will save my life; if you refuse, you may save my soul. Suppose you toss a copper, Pierre. Heads—a life, tails—a soul. The devil would laugh at

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such gambling. I think he *has* laughed at me more than once."

That was all, save the amount of the money she required and the address of her bankers. Pierre crushed the letter in his hands and stared blankly ahead for a moment, then got up and went quickly into the house, while Yuku sat still, turning the papers over and over.

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XXI.

ALONE in his room, Pierre read the letter again. Underneath its reckless words he read the shame and heart-break in it. A sudden fury possessed him against them both, the dead husband and the living mother who had wrought this change in the girl. He realized the life she must have lived to be transformed from a careless, light-hearted, rather timid girl, into this hard, sorrowful woman. A certain resentment, not against any individual, but against fate, succeeded to his first pity and anger. He had been so happy, Yuku was so dear, life so peacefully sweet, and now, as a bolt from the blue, came this letter bringing in its train a host of recollections,

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of regrets, of memories long banished from his thoughts, which he dreaded to have recalled.

And yet, as he sat there musing, it was borne in upon him slowly that he had ceased to love the girl. Not that he admitted it in so many words, for he had grown so accustomed to that belief that he did love her that he could not now differentiate between love and a simply tender memory, but this news of her widowhood did not affect him as he might have expected.

"If I were free," he murmured, "I'd go to her," and as he uttered the words it came to him in a flash that he was glad that he was not free. It was rather a revelation to Pierre, and one, indeed, that he hardly appreciated at the moment. There was a great compassion for the widowed girl in his heart, an earnest wish to help her in the best possible manner, but after the

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first shock of the letter, after the first involuntary stirring of those old emotions that never wholly die, Pierre felt no pain on his own account, no regret for himself that things were as they were—only a deep pity for her and the wish to help.

“If you refuse, I may save my soul,” he repeated. “Perhaps, but I think it hardly probable, and yet—I’ll ask Yuku; a woman’s advice on such a question is invaluable.”

He hurried out into the garden again where Yuku was still busy, much too busy, with the papers. She seemed to be repeating something to herself, and as Pierre drew near he caught the words “give and give, body and soul and”—she broke off and looked quickly up at Pierre, smiled at him, her hands still moving about among the papers on the table.

“Yuku, dear, I want my little sec-

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retary's wise head and my little wife's sympathetic heart to join forces and tell me how I am to answer this letter."

"Yes, Pierre."

"I will read it in French to you dear, that you may quite comprehend it."

"If you please, Pierre." He did so, and asked her what she thought of the writer.

"I think, Pierre, that she is very unhappy and that the hard tone is just a mask to cover it."

"I think so, too, dear. I suppose you know who it is from?"

"I know, Pierre." Oh, if they had only looked into each other's eyes then; if Pierre had but seen the wild distress in Yuku's; if Yuku had but read the love in Pierre's. But Yuku's eyes were hidden by her lowered lashes and Pierre's were fixed

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thoughtfully on the distant hills. If those blue hills could only have spoken to him—if the soft grey clouds coming up from the west had been given voices—if the cherry blossoms above his head could but have cried aloud—"Oh, look! and wait! and think! What are you doing? Oh, think what are you doing!" The clouds suddenly obscured the sun, the hills turned grey, a quick gust of wind brought some of the pink petals fluttering to the ground as if all nature were protesting against him. But Pierre paid no heed, thoughtless, as men are and must ever be, he thought only of himself, of how the letter had affected *him* and what it would be wise for *him* to do. And forget the terrible night of the flower fête and Yuku's anguish, forget that she might still believe that he loved the "other one." Forgot that though he knew that his love for

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her was dead, so far as Yuku knew it was as much alive as ever. He could not realize the cruelty of what he was doing—it simply didn't enter his head to look at his conduct from any point of view other than his own. Pierre, who willingly would not have hurt an insect, would surely never hurt Yuku. It was just that it never occurred to him—just because he was a man. So, with that sublime egotism which is the birthright of all men, even as a blind man walks straight over a precipice, so Pierre came to Yuku for her advice and guidance in this matter of assisting the woman he had once loved.

“What shall I do, Yuku?”

“I think, Pierre, that I would send the money.”

“You think it would be best?”

“Yes, Pierre; you see”—oh, what busy little fingers, what tremblingly

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busy little fingers—"you have told me about her mother, and I think, though she does not say so, that her mother may have almost forced her to write to you, and I believe that if you don't send her the money that her mother will make her obtain it in *some* way, perhaps in a way that will be harder for her than this."

"What a little head you have, Yuku! I believe with your woman's insight you have divined the whole truth. Very well, then, I'll see to it at once. Poor girl, poor girl." He rose, kissed Yuku good-bye, and strode off through the garden. As the gate closed with a click behind him Yuku raised her head and saw Nancy standing before her.

"So," cried Mrs. Becket, "she's not content with breaking his heart once, but must be writing to him and asking for money, must she?"

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"Nancy! You have been listening?"

"Yes, I *have* been listening," returned Nancy, shortly, "and what's more I'll listen again if I think it's my duty. You're just a pair of babes in the woods and I'm to look after you, and I'll do it if I become a chronic eavesdropper!"

"But Nancy—"

"Oh, you can 'But Nancy' me and tell me it's wrong, but you can't change me, and it's no good trying to argue, Miss Yuku, for your English won't hold out. Where's Master Pierre?"

"He has gone to the city," Yuku said, preparing to enter the house without further words, for she recognized the futility of attempting to correct Nancy when she took such an extraordinary attitude towards both master and mistress.

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But Nancy barred her path.

"Gone to the city," she echoed, "to send the money, I suppose. My baby's money. It's stealing from his own child. 'Tis a good thing you're here, Miss Yuku, or he'd be offering to marry the brazen huzzy and bringing home a stepmother for Koki."

Yuku started as if stabbed and sat down quickly.

"You think so, Nancy?" A paper had fallen to the ground, and in stooping to pick it up Nancy did not see her mistress' face.

"Yes," she grumbled, "to be sure he would. Going straight off to-morrow on the 'Scylla,' I haven't the slightest doubt." She placed the paper on the table and caught sight of Yuku's pale face.

"Why you're white as a sheet," she exclaimed. "All on account of that letter, I'll be bound. What busi-

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ness Master Pierre had coming and troubling you with it, I don't see. He ought to be ashamed of himself. I'll give him a good piece of my mind when he comes home, or my name's not Nancy Becket."

"You shall not say a word," cried Yuku. "I opened the letter myself. I saw before he did, and it was right for him to ask me about it and, and " her voice trembled—" if the whole world said he was wrong in something that he did it would be proof enough for me of its being right, just because he did it." Yuku had fallen back into her French, but Nancy understood her, and was silent a moment, her face working strangely, then like the good creature she was, she burst into tears, caught Yuku's little hand, kissed it frantically and rushed into the house, while Yuku still sat by the lily pool. A few minutes later, Nancy reappear-

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ed very red as to the eyes, but smiling withal carrying little Koki, while Chuchu's boy made ready the small ginrickshaw, which it was his particular pride to push when the baby was taken out. Yuku, seeing these preparations for a walk, crossed over to the path and suggested that Nancy should take the child to a sandy beach not very far away and that they should have their luncheon at the little tea-house, and the baby could play in the sand all day. Perhaps Barney might like to join them? Chuchu's boy, with as near an approach to a smile on his face as anyone had ever seen, was dispatched to find Barney, who returned with them, highly approving of the plan. Yuku herself put Koki in the rickshaw, covering her with the blue and white knitted shawl, and kissed her a great many times. When they started, Chuchu's

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boy pushing the baby, who was waving a particularly hideous wooden doll of the boy's carving towards her mother, and Nancy and Barney walking arm in arm behind, Yuku stood at the gate watching and throwing kisses to Koki until they reached the turning. Even then she still stood, straining her eyes against the trees that hid them from her sight, until a gust of wind blowing the gate to with a slam, recalled her to herself. She turned and went into the house. No one was about, for Senten and the servants were all busy in the kitchens, which were connected with the house only by a long, covered passage. The door of the room where Koki and Nancy slept was ajar. Yuku went in. There were two beds in the room, a larger one for Nancy and a small, white, dimity-curtained one for the baby. Yuku gave a little cry as she looked at it. Nancy had not wait-

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ed to straighten the bedclothes after Koki's nap and they were tossed as the little thing always tossed them. And there on the pillow was still the round, crushed-in place where the dear little head had lain. Yuku, in a passion of tears, threw herself down on the bed, still warm from the contact of the adored little body, and pressed her face into the pillow where her baby's head had been.

“ Oh, my baby, my baby, my little, little baby.” But not for long did she lie there, for Yuku's love for her husband was many times stronger than her love for her baby, and there was something that she wished to do for him and must do before he returned home to-day, lest her courage should not be strong enough to-morrow.

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XXII.

FOR Yuku was going away. Going far away, so far that Pierre could never find her; so far, indeed, that she could never return.

She soon controlled herself and came out of the room, closing the door behind her. She was very calm. Too calm, far, far too calm, with that dangerous purpose in her soul. If she had thrown herself down in a transport, as she had once up in the old garden at Harris'; if she had cried and struggled and torn her soft hair, there would have been more hope for her. But there was no battle going on within the little heart to-day, there was no wild questioning, no wrestling with herself.

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For it was all quite simple to Yuku. The other woman had been out of Pierre's reach when he married Yuku, and Yuku had comforted him. But now the other woman's husband was dead, and if it were not for Yuku Pierre could go to her and she would marry him. And Pierre loved her. There wasn't any place for Yuku now, so she argued in her terribly calm little brain. She had done all she could, she had given, and given unselfishly, and now that she was not only no longer necessary, but really a burden, she would go away. "He will marry me now," Yuku murmured, as she walked about his den with aimless steps, yet unable to leave it, touching all his books and the little personal articles that he cared for with shaking fingers; "even Nancy understands that if he were free from me he would marry her. Of course he still loves

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her best"—the little hands were busy now, plucking at the folds of her pink kimona; "it is but natural that he should want to go to her. But my dear Pierre, my dear Pierre, oh, my dear, dear husband—he would stay with me forever and never leave me, nor let me know that he was grieving. Oh, Pierre, my darling, you shall be happy if Yuku can make you so." She walked about the room whispering brokenly to herself. "What did Nancy say? 'Give and give, body and soul, life itself—life itself.' " It was terrible, the way the slender hands shook and lifted and fell and clutched at her dress, as she crossed to a small cabinet and took something out. Something that gleamed for a second as the light from the window caught it. Something very cold, to judge by her shudder as she touched it. Still with calm, dry eyes and only by her

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shaking, quivering hands betraying the fear and anguish in her heart, Yuku gazed at the something before she slipped it into her sleeve.

"My last gift to Pierre," she whispered. She thought of Pierre's grief, for Pierre would be very sorry, at first, very, very sorry. "I wish I could spare him that," she thought, her eyes filling with tears as she pictured him, "but I can't do that, and he will understand and be glad, very soon." There was nothing melodramatic in this last act on the stage of Yuku's little life. It was the simple, natural sequence, the only thing to be done. Pierre just didn't need her any more, that was all.

Suddenly Yuku began to cry, not with that abandonment that she had given way to in the child's room, but with a pitiful, childish sobbing, infinitely more pathetic. She took her

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locket in which was Pierre's picture, opened it, kissed it, and then pressed it against her heart, crushing against her bare breast till the sharp, gold edges cut the tender flesh and the red drops fell from it like tears. Then, still weeping and murmuring his name over and over, she made her way into the garden where the cherry blossoms were falling fast in the newly arisen wind.

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XXIII.

MEANWHILE Pierre had gone down into the city. There were several matters to be attended to at his office and it was lunch time before he found Elmsley. He ran into him at the hotel steps and they went into lunch together.

"By the way, Elmsley," Pierre said, when they had lighted their cigarettes and the waiter had placed the tea service in front of the elder man, "I want you to do a bit of banking for me, if you will. My Japanese isn't fit to cope with these Tokyo institutions with their eternal red tape and complicated methods. Will you help me out?"

"Certainly, my boy."

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"It would be rather caddy if it were anyone but you," Pierre said, "but since you know all the story you might as well know the sequel," and he tossed Evelyn's note across the table.

Elmsley read it through. "So," he said, and returned it to its owner.

"You are displeased?" asked Pierre, noting his tone.

"Displeased, my dear Pierre. Dear me, no. I am never either pleased or displeased. It takes too much out of one. I am surprised, though, at the young lady's—shall we call it tenacity? Of course, one can never fully appreciate another's point of view, but I think had I been in the young lady's place, I really think Pierre, that I should not have written to you, and if I were in your place, which fortunately for the lady I am not, I should not answer it. I believe you

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have decided to send the money, however, have you not?"

"Yes," Pierre answered quietly, "I know you don't approve, but I am going to send it."

Elmsley smiled rebukingly.

"Tut, tut, my dear boy. I assure you I make it a practice neither to approve nor to disapprove of anybody. Perhaps it scarcely seems wise to me that you should thus open a connection between yourself and the impecunious lady—but as you think best, of course, I presume you intend to send double the amount she asks?"

"I will send at least so much," replied Pierre, keeping control of his temper, which was rising under the other's manner. "As for the connection, I do not believe that she will take any advantage of that. I don't think you quite understand."

Elmsley leaned across the table and

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said in a low tone, his eyes narrowing slightly.

"I am thinking of your wife, Pierre, and I am thinking, too, that you are either a damned fool or a damned scoundrel."

Pierre turned white and half arose from his chair, but there were other people in the room and he remembered himself and said in a tone as quiet as the other's, though scarcely as steady.

"You are an older man than I, Elmsley, and your mind has become so used to seeing the evil side of life that it does not recognize any other. Your insinuation is so ridiculous that I shall not even ask you to retract it. The money I send is sent to an old friend who is in sore need. That that friend is a woman and a woman whom I once loved makes her claim on my friendship only so much the

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greater, although you can see only the basest of motives in her appeal to me and in my response." The boyish tone, for Pierre was very young still, had grown deep and strong, something noble shone in the clear, indignant eyes, and Elmsley watched him with a certain interest, blowing out the smoke from his cigarette in rings the while.

"As for my wife, my dear wife," Pierre added, "she has read the letter herself and quite agrees with me. Indeed, it is on her advice that I am acting in sending the money."

Elmsley laid down his cigarette and again leaned towards Pierre.

"You say Yuku read that letter?"

"Yes, I read it to her in French and explained it to her."

"Did you explain that your feeling for the woman is dead, that you look on her simply as an old friend?"

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"No, Yuku surely knows how I love her without being told. She has probably forgotten that I ever did love this other woman. Why bring all that time back to her?"

"Then you have never told her that you love her and not this 'Evelyn,' though you once told her you loved this creature the best?"

"Why, no, I haven't told her in so many words—you can't think—"

"Ah, a moment ago I was not quite sure which of two epithets you deserved. It is the former, I observe. My dear Pierre, allow me to inform you that you are a damned fool."

Pierre's mouth grew grim, but there was something in the eagle eyes that frightened him.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you had better go home and explain that to Yuku as quickly as you can get there. I even

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suggest that you run, Pierre, malgre your hearty luncheon."

"Why? Why?"

Both men had risen and were making their way quickly from the dining room.

"Because, Pierre, it is just possible that the Japanese in Yuku's nature may transcend the other this time and that your wife may kill herself."

Pierre turned a face of horror towards his godfather, then dashed out of the hotel like a madman and rushed hatless up the street. He ran as he had never run before, yet he felt as one feels in a dream, as if his feet had weights tied to them, the sickening thud of his heart beat in his ears and there was a mist before his eyes. A mist before his outward eyes, but the eyes of his mind were suddenly clear.

When he reached the turning from

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where he could see the Water Lily house he gave a low cry, "Thank God! Thank God!" the sudden relief made him faint, and insensibly he slackened his pace. For Yuku was standing in the garden. Just as he had seen her that first day three years ago, standing under the trees in her soft gown, with the flowers in her hair and pink petals falling like rain around her. She did not see him, her face being turned towards the distant temple and he had no breath to call, and then suddenly a black cloud seemed to fall on him and he rushed through the gate with a terrible cry. For Yuku had taken something from her sleeve, there had been a flash in the air and she had fallen upon the flower-strewn grass. Almost as she fell Pierre reached her, and raising her in his arms tore open her dress,

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Elmsley's words crying through his brain:

"They never have to strike a second time." When he had found what he searched for he knew that the words were true. Nevertheless he staunched the wound as best he could and dashed water from the pool on her insensible little face, for Yuku's little heart was still beating faintly like a feeble bird against its cage.

As he held her there in his arms, the scales fell from Pierre's eyes, he knew he loved Yuku, now and eternally.

"Yuku, Yuku," he cried, and his voice called the little fluttering spirit back and heavy lashes lifted. A slow look of rapture crept into her face, and they looked into each other's eyes and read and understood.

"Oh, Yuku, why, why?"

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"Pierre, I did not know. It was for you," and Pierre, his whole soul newly awakened, understood.

"Oh, my darling, if I could have seen into your heart; but there is time yet—a doctor. You shall not die."

Yuku with an effort raised her little hand to his lips.

"Hush, Pierre, I can only live a few minutes. I know, dear. Don't leave me. You—have seen?"

Pierre nodded.

"Then you know that it is useless to hope. Hold me on your heart, Pierre. Oh, my husband, my husband, don't cry, don't cry." For Pierre's whole frame shook with convulsive sobs, the terrible, tearless sobs of a strong man.

"Pierre, it had to be. Otherwise, we never would have understood."

"Oh, Yuku, Yuku; Yuku, my little, little girl."

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"Say 'wife,' Pierre."

"My wife."

"And mother, Pierre, call me that again."

"Mother," he whispered, "little mother. Oh, God, my baby's mother."

"Your sobs are breaking my heart, Pierre." For her sake he controlled them.

"Pierre."

"Yes, my darling."

"I am very tired."

"Then go to sleep in my arms, sweetheart, they are your best resting place."

"My resting place—kiss me."

Silence, then with a little sob:

"Pierre, my side—it's hurting me! Lift me high, Pierre, let me—lie—on—your—breast."

When Nancy and her husband returned, they found Pierre uncon-

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scious, still holding his wife in his arms; and the child, running to the edge of the pool, cried aloud that two beautiful new lily buds had blossomed since the morning.

